

# IMPRIMATUR.

*Hic liber vere Christianus qui si Primam spectes pietatem, Summam Eloquentiam, Rationum pondus nihil in eo deest quo minus possit nos Omnes quales tam accurate describit, vere Christianos efficere; Puriori ævo sane dignissimus est nisi quod tam potens sit qui vel nostrum Seculum transformaret in melius. Benedicat Deus Operi & Authori.*

THO. TOMKYNs.

R. Rmo. in Christo Patri ac Domino Dno.  
GILBERTO Divina Providentia Archiepiscopo Cantuariensi à Sacris Domesticis.



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*Rev: May 1686.*

THE  
**C A U S E S**  
OF THE  
**Decay of Christian Piety!**

OR AN  
IMPARTIAL SURVEY  
Of the Ruines of  
**CHRISTIAN RELIGION,**  
Undermin'd by Unchristian Practice.

*R. Allestree*

Written by the Author of  
**THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN,**  
*D<sup>r</sup> Santvoest Dean of Pauls, & Arch-deacon of Cant.*

**INIMICVS HOMO FECIT HOC.** *Math: 13.*



**L O N D O N,**  
Printed by R. Norton for T. Garthwait, in S. Bartho-  
lomews Hospital; near Smithfield, 1667.

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**T**HOUGH *this be the first appearance this Traēt has made in the world; yet its Being is of somewhat a more ancient date; it having received its lineaments and perfect form some years since: when the Author not having partiality enough to think it worthy publick view; had adjudg'd it, if not to perpetual darkneß, yet at least to a long indefinite suspension from seeing light. In this interval, 'tis more than probable some passages may have lost much of their propriety to the present state of affairs, they having been adapted to circumstances which may since have received some change: and herein I must bespeak the Readers candor, to make such allowances as the matter shall require; of which yet I suppose there will not occur very many, or very important occasions.*

*BUT would God I were to apologize for a yet far greater absurdity, that our scene were so shifted, that the whole design of the ensuing discourse, might become one entire impertinence, and that our more eminent conformity to the rules of our Christian institution, might supersede these disquisitions about our failances and aberrations. But alas, I find I have pitcht upon a subject not like to be out-dated; vice daily gaining not only strength, but impudence: nay we are not only become witnesses against our selves by declaring our Sin as So-*

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dom, but we have forced God also to attest against us by punishing us in a manner no less conspicuous and manifest. And surely then 'tis more than time for us to take the Prophets advice, Hag. i. 7. to consider our ways, to reflect not only on those robust, gyant-like provocations which have thus bid defiance to Heaven; but also to sift out those secret incendiaries that have inflamed us to this mad daring; to examine what that ~~was~~ that inflammable bitumen, the untemper'd mortar is with which we build our Babel, by discovering those mispersuasions and false confidences, wherein many of our other guilts are founded: in order to which this slight Tract offers its feeble, yet well meant aids; being forced out of its retirement, and like Cræsus his dumb Son, compell'd to speak by impulse of the present exigent: and how despicable soever the Mite contributed be in its self, yet if it may provoke the more wealthy to cast in richer gifts, it may prove no unprofitable agent for the Corban. 'Tis evident this is a season which not only warrants, but exacts the most importunate endeavours of perswading men to those things that belong to their Peace.

FOR although 'tis true that every state of sin, sets us also in a state of hostility with God, yet our present condition seems to have advanced us beyond the common degrees even of that. 'Tis we know, high insolence against a Prince to despise and violate his laws, but when to that are superadded contumelies, and design'd affronts to his person, this is such an accumulated outrage, as will vanquish the most resolv'd Patience. And this alas appears to be our case: we have long indulg'd to our selves the breach of all Divine laws, gratified every appetite, every passion and lust with the forfeiture  
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*of our allegiance, and as if this would not serve to render us irreconcilable enough to God, we are now grown to subjoyn malice to licentiousness; project not so much to please our selves, as to displease him; profess a contempt not only of his commands, but himself; and seek no less to dethrone Him, than abrogate those. Thus have we made it a kind of personal quarrel, and by those impious blasphemies we daily dart against Heaven, do as it were dare the Divine Majesty to vindicate its self. Whether his great longanimity may have given our Hectors a fancy, that they had vapour'd God (as they are us'd to do men) into a tameness, I shall not examine: but his late proceedings with us sufficiently testifie that he means no longer to decline our challenge. He now appears to avow the enmity as openly as we have done; and has already given us competent essays, how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. 10. 31.*

*'TIS true indeed that he has formerly own'd his controversy with our Land, and by a long series of great and heavy calamities attested himself the God to whom vengeance belongeth, Psal. 94. 1. Yet as great Monarchs use to quell lesser insurrections by their Lieutenants, and subordinate Officers, but when the rebellion grows high and desperate, then to encounter it in their own persons; so is it here observable that God then Chastised, and tried to reduce us by inferiour instruments, found us out Lictors among our selves, and made one mans sin the punishment of anothers: but now as if he had the same jealousy for his honour which Joab had at the siege of Rabba for Davids, 2 Sam. 12. 28. as if he fear'd to be rival'd in the glory of our ruine, he takes us into his own hand, marks us out, as he did Pharaoh, to be the Trophies of his*

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own peculiar vengeance, appearing signally against us in all the dreadful solemnities of an enraged enemy.

FOR first, has he not as Moses speaks, Deut. 32. 41. whet his glittering Sword? Nay, has he not moreover (in the Scripture style,) made it drunk with blood? by sweeping away multitudes of us in a raging PESTILENCE, which Marcht from one part of the Nation to another in a kind of Triumphant progress, as if it had receiv'd the same mandate God gave Abraham, Gen. 13. 17. Arise walk through the land, in the length thereof and in the breadth thereof, for unto thee will I give it. Whether it may not thus fatally complete its course, notwithstanding the halt it seems to make, and pass from our Dan to our Beerseba, is a question that can with no probability be resolv'd in the negative; for as it is not to be doubted but there were in Judea as great sinners as those on whom the Tower of Siloam fell, Luke 13. that those who have hitherto escaped have an equal share in the provoking cause of the Judgement: So also that great unsensibleness many of us shew of what others groan under, is a very ominous abode; it being not only a dangerous symptome, but a probable means of drawing that calamity to our selves. When God sees we will suffer nothing by way of consent and sympathy with others, 'tis but equal we have our part in a more direct and immediate infliction, and feel what we would not compassionate. Thucydides mentions it as the effect of the great Plague at Athens that it had extinguish't humanity; brought in a kind of ferity and barbarousness among them, rendring them openly villanous to men, and blasphemous against God; *δὲν νόμος, ἢ ἀσπίς, ἢ νόμος ἐνδοῖς ἀνέστη*, there was no restraint of law or religion, one part being despe-  
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rate upon prospect of their danger, the other presumptuous upon the contemplation of their Escape; and sure if we look impartially, ours will appear to have had somewhat of the same operation. Those compassions which the novelty it seems at first gave us to sufferers in this kind, seems now quite extinct; so unconcern'd are we grown to every thing that touches us not in our individuals, as if we owned no relation to the species of mankind, though backt also with that closer tie, which the spiritual consanguinity has superadded. A pregnant indication of this may, I doubt not, be collected (as from many other circumstances, so particularly) from the great haste has in many places been made, to lay aside those publick Humiliations & intercessions which were recommended to us as well by the command of Authority, as the common distress; but have been cast off without the subtraction of either of those motives. Whether we are duly mindful of the afflictions of Joseph, that cannot afford one day in a moneth for a solemn reflection on them, I must leave to every mans conscience to discuss. But sure we are no less wanting to our selves than them in this neglect; the office being no less designed for Antidote than cure, to prevent the Judgement where it is not, than to remove it where it is: and if we will neither deprecate on our own behalfs, nor intercede on others; we are sure as improvident, as uncharitable, and may justly expect the fatal event of both.

IN the interim, although the present respite from destruction, and our own deceitful hearts flatter us and say Peace, Peace; we have all reason to conclude that God is not attoned, the quarrel and hostility goes on, and his hand is stretcht out still, Es. 5. 25. And so indeed we



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find it in other dismal events. Slaughter we know is not the only effect of War; which as it destroys the lives of many, blasts the supports and Joys of more. This consequence of hostility we find well express'd by the Prophet Joel 2. 3. The land is as the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness, and herein also hath the Lord of Hosts, the great God of battle shew'd himself mighty against us, he has invaded us not only with Sword, but FIRE: and in so stupendous manner desolated the glory of our Land, that no humane fury, could have procured, or even have wisht the like vastation and ruines. That City which was great among the Nations, and Princess among the Provinces, Lam. I. I. lies buried in her own Ashes, and is both Funeral-pile and Urne to her self, and what neither foreign nor domestic enemies could in a succession of many ages effect, one blast of the breath of his displeasure, Psal. 18. has performed in a moment. So verifying even in a literal sense the Apostles affirmation, Heb. 12. 29. that our God is a consuming fire. Plutarch tells us when Fabius sackt Tarentum, he took not away their Images, but said, *ἵστανται τοὺς θεοὺς Ταραντίνους καὶ ὁλομήδους*, let us leave the Tarentines their Gods that are offended with them. 'Tis our Calamity to be signally under the indignation of our incensed God, which in that great Captains judgement, was somewhat more dreadful than the worst inflictions of War: for what industry soever has been used to entitle either the negligence or designs of men unto our overthrow, yet sure never any judgement had more legible marks of Gods immediate hand: such as shew he meant to revenge the abuse of his former gentle methods: that those who would not be reformed by the  
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*slighter corrections wherein he dallied with them, might find a judgment worthy of God, Wisd. 12. 26. And sure such was this, which both for its greatness and irresistibleness does well own its Author, and shews his wrath was accended to a very excessive heat, that thus poured out its self not only like, but in Fire, Lam. 2. 4.*

*I shall not here assume the Politicians part, and weigh the detriment we have sustained by it in our civil interest, of which perhaps nothing but time and experience can give us a full estimate; it rather suits my design to observe what relates to our spiritual concerns, whilst Gods dwelling places were involved in the same ruine with ours; his own peculiar portion not exempted, but as the Prophet complains, Es. 64. 11. Our holy and beautiful houses where our fathers praised him are burnt with fire: this though perhaps least considered, is sure not the least sad circumstance, had only the scenes of our luxury, or our fraud been destroyed, it might have sent us with more fervency to the places of our devotion, and we might have frequented Gods houses the better, for being destituted of our own; but when these also are made parts of the common heap, 'tis a sad testimonial that our very religion was provoking; That that pageant-like piety which we deposited in our CHURCHES, only to make a shew with on holy-days, served only to defile those holy places, and rendred them so polluted as required no slighter purgation than that of FIRE. 'Tis we know not long, since those mansions sacred to the Prince of Peace, were even in the vulgar obvious sense, made magazines for War; but yet more so in reference to that Pulpit-wild-fire, which set the Nation in combustion; whether that strange Fire which some of our Nadabs and Abihu's*

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introduced there, may not (even at this distance) have done its part to the drawing down this FIRE from Heaven, I leave to their serious reflection. But neither the Hypocrite nor the Seditious must ingross the guilt of this ruine: The Atheist vyes with both; for alas! what should God do with Temples among those, who pay him no worship? or why should he let those sacred monuments remain among them, to whom all memorials of him serve but as occasions, and incentives to blaspheme him? They have long said with those in Job, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; and now 'tis but equitable (I had almost said Civil) to take them at their word, and no longer reside among those who so avowedly disclaim him.

AND this, 'tis much to be feared, may be the portent of this dismal vastation: we know men use not to deface those houses, where they intend to inhabit: and sure this abhorring his Sanctuary, and casting off his Altar, Lam. 2. is a dreadful sign, that he means no longer to continue his residence among us; indeed we find in Scripture that his promise of cohabiting is always limited to those who own themselves his people; and therefore when so many of us have openly renounced that relation, we can with no justice expect the blessing appendant to it.

BUT perhaps this will seem to such no formidable thing; Gods so withdrawing of himself is but agreeable to their wishes, a kind of quitting the field to them, and so rather matter of complacency than regret: but 'tis to be considered that there is another presence of God that will infallibly succeed this; when he removes that of his grace, 'tis to make way for that of his anger; like the Philistines we shall know the God of Israel is among us  
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by his Plagues, 1 Sam. 5. or to make a yet more dreadful comparison, we shall like the damned in hell, discern his presence only in the punitive effects of it, and read his nearness in our sufferings. And sure this will be but an ill exchange, even to the profaneſt of us, thoſe that have moſt deſpiſed or loathed the ſoft breathings of his Word and Spirit; will find it yet harder to endure the whirlwinds of his wrath, which will ſnatch from us thoſe ſecular advantages for whoſe purſuit we have neglected the better part, Luke 10. 42. and leave us as little of worldly enjoyments, as we deſired to have of ſpiritual.

OF this our late Calamities have given us a sad Preludium, and God knows how soon we may see the last scene of the fatal Tragedy, it being too probable that this is Gods last Experiment upon us, like the Causticks and Scarifyings to a Lethargick patient; if this bring us not to sense we are like to sleep on to destruction: And alas what uncomfortable syntomes appear even in this point also. Who is there that (unless awakened by his personal concernments) seems at all to startle at the noise of publick ruine? When God in displeasure threatned the Israelites that he would remit their conduct to his Angel, and not go himself with them. The text says, they mourned and no man put on his ornaments on him, *Exod. 33. 4.* or as the *LXX*, καταπύδυσεν ἐν πένθει τοῖς, and the *Syriack*, ܐܡܪܝܢ ܐܬܝܬܝܢ ܕܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ ||, they stript themselves of their Armour, their ruffling garb of War, and appeared in the penitential dress of sackcloth and ashes: but now that we are given up not to a conducting but destroying Angel, what signs of remorse do we shew? What vanity (I fear I may ask what vice) have we substracted, upon the sense of Gods anger? What

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*What nicety in cloaths or diet have we cut off in sympathy with the nakedness and hunger of our afflicted brethren? Nay, do not the unreasonable follies of too many among us, look as if we triumpht in their miseries, found Musick in the discordant sounds of their groans, and our own laughter; and emulated that infamous barbarity of Nero, who played while Rome burned? 'Tis mentioned by the Prophet as a most preposterous thing, a kind of impious Solecism to revel under the menace of judgements. Thus saith the Lord, A sword, a sword, it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter, it is furnished that it may glitter, should we then make mirth? Ezek. 21. 9, 10. and certainly it less befits us against whom God has not only prepared, but used his sword; who are not only under the threats, but actual Execution of his vengeance, and what is it but interpretatively to prompt him, to yet sharper inflictions, by shewing him that these have not edge enough to penetrate us? With how much indignation God resents this perverse, this contumelious behaviour, we may read, Esay 22. 12, 13, 14. In that day did the Lord call to weeping, and mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth, and behold joy and gladness, slaying Oxen and killing Sheep, eating Flesh and drinking Wine; eating and drinking for to morrow we shall dye: Upon which follows, that severe denunciation: Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you dye. Of so deep a tincture is this guilt, that 'tis as lasting as our lives, and like the fretting leprosie in the house, Levit. 14. 45. can be removed by nothing but its dissolution.*

*O then let us not adde this to the heap of our other provocations, mistake impudence or desperation for courage;  
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*and frantickly desie that omnipotence which we are sure we can not resist: but since it has pleased God even in wrath to remember mercy, let us transcribe his copy, be as kind to our selves as he has been to us, and stop in our career as he has done in his; not so madly affect a full parallel with Sodom and Gomorrah, as to force him to destroy that remnant, Es. 1. 9. which alone distinguishes our case: but rather take pattern from Nineveh; cry, and cry mightily to God, joyn humiliation to our prayers, and reformation to both. And could we be perswaded to do this with the same sincerity, and universality, we might hope it may be with the same success also: would every one who has contributed to the accending, as industriously contribute to the appeasing of Gods wrath: would all who have brought their fire-brands bring also their tears to quench them, as there would be no dry Eyes in the Nation at the present, so might it prevent as great a Generality of weeping ones for the future; secure us such a tranquility here, as may calmly convey us to that impassible state, where all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, where there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, Rev. 21. 4.*



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K. DAVID



PSALM. II9. V. 136.

*Rivers of water run down mine eyes because  
men Keep not thy Law.*

EZEKIEL



EZEKIEL. chap. 37. v. 3.  
*Son of man can these dry Bones  
live? — Lord Thou Knowest*





## CHAP. I.

*The Character of Christian Religion; demonstrating its aptitude to plant exemplary Vertue and Sanctity.*

**T**HE holy *Psalmist* gives it as part of the Character of Pious persons, and therewithal a description of their felicity, *Psal. 92. 13. That they shall bring forth more fruit in their Age:* and what he thus observes of the members disjunctively and apart, reason suggests to be in a higher, and more eminent manner applicable to the whole body united: And it being as well the mark as duty of every single Christian to grow in grace, *2 Pet. 3. 18.* we may by all rules of Proportion, conclude that the collective masse of such, the whole Church is by this time near attained to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, *Eph. 4. 3.* And indeed this is so regular an inference, that whilst the premises stand firm 'tis impossible to shake the conclusion, the entire body must necessarily augment answerably to the growth of its several parts. And if we should so far let loose to speculation as to forget our experience: If we measure the effect only by the power and energy of the cause, we should surely be as far from doubting the premises also. Christianity is in its self of so prolifick a nature, so apt to impregnate the hearts and lives of its profelytes, that it is hard to imagine, that

that any branch should want a due fertility that is engrafted into so vigorous a stock.

FOR first, in its spring and original it is most supernatural and divine, derived immediately from him, who had nothing more of man than he purposefully assumed to draw us the nearer to him as God. He it was that disseminated this doctrine, and that in order to the *purifying to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*; and certainly his choice abundantly justifies its propriety to that end, and his descent from Heaven on that errand puts so venerable a solemnity upon it, that though his descent were very astonishing, yet it will be much more so, that it should fail of the designed effect.

AND indeed did our Faith give us no clue to lead us to the author, yet its composition would speak it to be of no humane extraction, its precepts are so excellent and refined, so agreeable to the more spiritual part of our temper, and so apt, as to forestall, so to cleanse and sublimate the more gross and corrupt, as shews flesh and blood never revealed it. Nay farther, so effectually providing for all those advantages to mankind, which the wisest of mens laws have in vain attempted, that methinks they all stand before it like the *Magicians* before *Moses*, and by their impotence tacitly confess it to be the finger of God. Twere too large a Theme to confront them in the several instances, let it suffice to observe one which has a common influence on all; and that is the immaculate *cleanness* of heart, which Christ, and only Christ's law requires. This is the only proper basis on which to superstruct, first *innocency*, and then

then *virtue*, and without this the most rigid exactors of outward purity, do but transcribe the folly of him, who Pumps very laboriously in a Ship, yet neglects to stop the Leak: or the worse tyranny of *Pharaoh* in requiring *Brick without Straw*: so far is it from a severity in our law-giver, thus to limit and restrain our thoughts, that it is an act of the greatest indulgence: by no means the laying on a new burden, but the furnishing us with an Engine to bear with ease that weight which otherwise the stoutest *Atlas* must sink under. And were but this one precept sincerely conformed to, it would not only facilitate but ascertain the obedience to all the rest. If the *first sparks* of ill were quencht within, what possibility is there they should ever break out into a flame? How shall he *kill* that dares not be angry? Be *Adulterous* in act, that did not first transgress in his desire? How shall he be *perjured* that fears an oath? Or *defraud* that permits not himself to covet? In the like manner all *positive acts* of virtue, are but the natural effects of the interior habit. Where the love of God is seated in the Heart, 'twill operate in all the faculties, keep them in a busie endeavour of doing acceptable service: when *fear* is planted there, it will break forth in outward reverence and duty; and so proportionably 'twill be in every other instance. 'Tis therefore an advice well becoming the wisdom of *Solomon*, *Prov.* 4. *to keep the heart with all diligence*: but then it is withal the work of him who is greater than *Solomon*, to teach us how to do this: for *unless he keep that City the watchman waketh but in vain*. If he instruct  
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not to secure those issues of life, they will betray and ruine, appear indeed *the savour of death unto death*. Now of this divine art of *Taëticks* and defence, Christianity is the only School, and therefore most fitly qualified for the producing all those supernatural excellencies to which the timely prepossession of the heart, is the rudiment and principle.

AND as the *preceptive* part enjoyns the most exact, and elevated vertue, so is it most advantageously enforc't by the *Promissory*, which both in respect of the kind and value of the rewards; and also the manner of proposing them, is most exquisitely adapted to the same end.

FOR first, if we consider the nature of the things promised, we shall find they are not gross and *carnal*, such as may court and gratifie the bestial part of us; but such as are proportioned to the supream and leading principle, as feast a *Soul*; and suit with the capacities of an *intelligence*. All the beatitudes the Gospel tenders to its votaries, either relate to the *purity* or peace of the mind in this life; or else to its completer *felicity* hereafter. And though 'tis true, the body is not wholly unconsidered, though the addition of all temporal necessities be promised, yet even those are for the Souls sake, either to secure it from the sin of solicitude and distrust, or to preserve it a useful instrument for the others service. And as for the future glory in which the body is to partake, 'tis to be observed, that flesh and blood can not inherit it; that load of earth which now engages to corruption must be put off,  
must



must be calcin'd and spiritualiz'd ; and thus made glorious, be clothed upon with Glory. So that in all the Gospel dispensation, there is no *provision for the flesh*, its lusts and sensualities. And then sure there cannot be a more unanswerable argument against our providing for it, than to see it left out of Gods care. Indeed had we proposals of a *Mahumetan* Paradise, were we to expect our blis only in the satiating our appetites, it might be reasonable here to whet them before hand, to stretch them to the utmost wideness, or in the Prophets phrase, *to enlarge our desires as Hell*, and by frequent antepasts excite our gust for that profuse perpetual meal. Or were we only to have our portion in this life, to enjoy an uninterrupted affluence of outward comforts, 'twere but good husbandry to improve them to the height, and the Wise mans advice would then cease to be Eirony, *Eccles. II. 9. Rejoyce O young man, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the sight of thine Eyes.* Had we only the prospect of a *Canaan*, such an eternal inheritance as a conquering Sword could give, as the salvation of a *Joshua*, and the affluence of milk and hony could produce. 'Twould be no wonder, if we never voluntarily endured the thirst and famine of the wilderness, but be always as they desiring meat for our lust, projecting the gratifying those desires in whose repletion we placed our happiness. But when our Religion makes us no such tender, when all its hopes are of another make, invite to those Diviner



6 *The Character of Christian Religion, &c.* Chap. I.

joys of which sensuality has no capacity or taste. What pretence can we have to cherish that *here*, which we must wholly be divested of *hereafter*, those immaterial felicities we expect, do naturally suggest to us, the necessity of preparing our appetites, and hungers for them, without which Heaven can be no Heaven to us: for since the pleasure of any thing results from the agreement between it and the desire, what satisfaction can *Spiritual* enjoyments give unto a *Carnal* mind? Alas, what delight would it be to the Swine to be wrapt in fine Linnen, and laid in Odours: his senses are not gratified by any such delicacies, nor would he feel any thing besides the torment of being with-held from the mire. And as little complacency would a brutish Soul find in those purer and refin'd pleasures, which can only upbraid, not satisfy him. So that could we by an impossible supposition phancy such a one assumed to those fruitions, his pleasure sure would be as little as his preparation for it was. Those *Eyes* which have continually beheld vanity, would be dazzled, not delighted with the *Beatifick vision*; neither could that *Tongue*, which has accustomed its self only to Oaths and Blasphemies, find Harmony or Musick in a *Hallelujah*. 'Tis the peculiar priviledge of the pure in heart, *that they shall see God*; and if any others could so invade this their enclosure, as to take Heaven by violence, it surely would be a very joyless possession to these men, and only place them in a condition to which they have the greatest averfation and Antipathy.

Antipathy. So that holiness here, is not only necessary to the acquiring, but the enjoyment of Bliss hereafter: and therefore unless men will contrive to annihilate their joys, and affect the monstrous riddle of being tormented in Heaven, they cannot but from this Spirituality of the promises, infer a necessity of purifying themselves, and being capable at least of innocent Celestial joys: and since that only can be done by vertuous practice here on Earth, the Obligation thereto must needs be very pressing and indispensable. And as the *nature* of the promises directs to this, so does the great transcendent *value* encourage and animate. *Hope* is the grand exciter of industry, and as the object of Hope is more or less *desirable*, so is the endeavour more *intense* or *remiss*; and upon this ground we must conclude the Christian has all reason to be the most indefatigable, seeing his expectations are the noblest and most encouraging. That they are so, we cannot but acknowledge, if we admit of the description which the *Spirit* gives: that *Spirit* which as he seals us to it, so is himself the earnest of that Inheritance. He in the Sacred Scriptures has drawn us a Map of the Countrey which we are to enter: and sure we may say of it as *Caleb* and *Joshua* did of *Canaan*, *Numb. 14. 7. the land is an exceeding good land.* For first, if we consider the Negative advantages it has, we shall find there is an absence of all the Ills, destructive or affrightful unto humane Nature. *There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain,*

8 *The Character of Christian Religion, &c. Chap. 1.*

*Revel. 21. 4.* Here alas we are infested by all these. *Sorrow* and *Pain*, prey and insult on all the comforts of our lives; leave us not a *Gourd*, which is not like that of *Jonah*, smitten with these *Worms*: and then comes *death*, the grand devourer, and spares not *life* it self. Nay, those little *respites* which we have from these, are so embittered by unpleasant expectations and *Pre-sages*, that we are sad before we are *afflicted*: in *pain* without a *disease*, and in *death* in the midst of *life*: and then a *State* exempted, not only from the *Calamities* but the *Fears* of these, may well deserve to be lookt upon with appetite.

BUT Heaven is designed for our reward, as well as rescue, and therefore is *adumbrated* by all those *positive excellencies* which can endear or recommend. It is a *Crown*, and that not of *thorns*, such as our *Saviours* was, and such as the more affected *Diadems* of the world oft prove unto the wearer, *but one of Glory*: nor is that *Crown*, nor that *Glory* like our *sublunary* splendors, which suddenly vanish, and leave the possessors to the greater obscurity and contempt: but 'tis *permanent*, such as *fades not away*, 1 *Pet. 5. 4.* or in *St. Pauls* phrase, *an eternal weight of Glory*. But to give you its more comprehensive Character, 'tis a *being with the Lord*, 1 *Thess. 4. 17.* Nay, 'tis a possessing even God himself. *He shall be their God*, *Rev. 21. 3.* and what can he want who possesses him who is all things? How can he fail of the most ravishing delight, that stands before him *in whose presence is the fulness of Joy*, and at  
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whose right hand are pleasures, and those not short or transient, but for evermore? So indefeisible is our estate in those Joys, that if we do not like mad prodigals sell it in reversion, we shall when we are once invested, be beyond the possibility of ill husbandry, not have it in our power to undo our selves. Now surely these are great and precious promises, such as may well sustain the weight of that inference the *Apostle* builds upon them; and engage us to cleanse our selves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. 7. 1. for they address to that Principle which is confessedly Predominant in our Nature; so that if the love of Christ cannot, yet the love of our selves may constrain us. How must it then affront and baffle the enticements of sin, when we compare its empty vanishing pleasures with those solid and durable joys? What a forestalling will it be of Satans markets, that God bids so much fairer for us: offers us that to which his ταῦτα πάντα σοι δώσω, all this will I give (could he make such a whole-sale) can bear no proportion, and how then shall we ever barter it away for those little petty commodities he retails to us; or make any other reply to his proffers, than a get thee behind me Satan? For alas! can we remember that we are candidates for a Kingdom, and yet retain the abject spirits of slaves? Do we expect to reign hereafter, and yet depose our selves before hand here? Suffer every the vilest lust to rule over us? Is so glorious a prize annex to the victory, and will

it not animate the faintest heart, and feeblest hands to the combat? What Lions can we fear in the way which this hope is not *Sampson* enough to encounter? How *light* are our heaviest, how *momentary* our most lasting Afflictions, if balanced with that *eternal weight of Glory*? Are we spoil'd of our goods, here is a reserve of treasure which no *Thief*, neither the slye, nor the avowed, the pilferer, nor the sequestrator can invade. Are we reduced to our *Saviours* destitution, not to have *where to lay our head*, yet we have a *building of God*, an house not made with hands eternal in the *Heavens*. Are we reproacht for the name of *Christ*, that *Ignominy* serves but to advance our future *Glory*, every such *Libel* here, becomes *Panegyrick* there. Nay, are we persecuted to death, that sends us but to take possession of the *Crown of Life*. Upon such sure grounds does our *Christianity* set us. While we make good its condition it puls out the sting of all that is most deadly. And in a more comprehensive sense, possesses us of the priviledge promised the *Disciples*, that *nothing should by any means hurt them*, *Mar. 16*. The most adverse chances being but like the ploughing and breaking the ground, in order to a more plentiful harvest. And yet we are not so wholly turned off to that reversion, as to have no supplies for the present; for besides the comfort of so great and certain an expectation in another *life*, we have promises also for *this*. Even of all those internal and spiritual satisfactions which attend the *practice of piety*. The feast of a good  
Conscience

Conscience is the true *Christians* daily diet, and sure whatever the rich men of the world think, he only can be said to fare deliciously: nay, he has yet more *supernatural* food, *Manna* rain'd down immediately from Heaven: the *Holy Spirit* sent on purpose to refresh and support him: those Joys which differ rather in degree than kind, from those which are to be his final portion. And that the *Soul* may not be too much incommoded in her house of clay, there is provision made for that also, such necessaries secured to the body, as may keep it in *Tenantable* repair: we have *Christs* express promise for it, that *to those that seek the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, all these things shall be added*: if not that superfluity which may oppress and load, (render the *body* rather the Tomb than Mansion of the *Soul*) yet such as may sustain and support us: and sure 'tis easie to decide which is the happier lot. In short, we are sure of enough to defray the charge of that voyage, which lands us at *Eternal Bliss*: and certainly he must be of a very sluggish or querulous humour, that shall *demur* upon setting out, or demand higher encouragements.

AND as the *nature* and value of the *Promises* render them most proper engagements and incentives to all *virtue*; so if we consider the *manner* of proposing, we shall find them in that respect also highly contributive to the same end. For first, they are clear and express, not wrapt up in dark *enigmatical* insinuations, wherein men must exercise their *sagacity* as well as their *faith*: but



revealed with that plainness, that 'tis impossible for any who knows but the letter of the *Gospel* to be ignorant of the Eternal rewards it proposes. And herein the difference belongs to *Christianity* above all other *Religions*, some whereof have left men so much in the dark, that many *Sects* among them have denied the immortality of the *Soul*, and sure they were but faint encouragements they could propose unto that *virtue* which was to perish with them. What should animate them to the rugged severe tasks of restraining appetites, subduing passions, eradicating habits who discerned no rewards for blameless *Souls*. 'Tis true indeed *virtue* is in her self perfectly amiable, though she brought no dowry, but experience shews us she has not many *Platonick* lovers: and when so few are ambitious to wed Her, when she brings an Eternal inheritance with her, we may easily guess how little she will be sought without it. When men once conclude that their *Spirits* shall vanish into the soft Air; the inference is very obvious, *Come on, let us use the creatures as in youth*; as we find it elegantly pursued, *Wisd. 2*. But of those who acknowledged a future being, their preceptions were very misty and obscure. The *Heathens* had such confus'd notions of their *Elysium*, that the *Epithet* of *shades* belong'd more properly to the darkness than the refreshment, and was a reward fit for the votaries of those ambiguous *Oracles* they consulted. And proportionably to the obscurity of their hopes were the Exercises of their *virtue*: their *Piety* was even overwhelmed  
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and confounded by the multitude of their *Deities*; nay, which is yet stranger, their *Gods* themselves seem to have been lost in their own croud: else sure the *Athenians* would never have inscrib'd an Altar to the unknown *God*: and indeed their offices were generally such, as if they had been devoted to no other, they having as little discerning of their *Worship* as of their *God*. 'Twas wrapt up in clouds and darkness; had mysterious recesses to which the common worshipper had no admittance; such as were to acquire a veneration only by not being understood: and though this must needs deprive their services of that spirit and quickness, which constitutes the *virtue* of devotion, yet alas their *Religion* had more than that negative contrariety to *Virtue*. Many of their *worships* being nothing but a solemnity of the foulest *vices*: and their *Divinity* taught them to violate *Morality*. A deceit *Satan* could not probably so long have triumpht in, had they had the Gospel notion of Heaven, for sure they could not have suppos'd their *Gods* of such mutable inclinations, as to affect *purity* in their cohabitants, and *pollution* in their Votaries: or such incongruous dispensers of rewards, as to apportion an impeccable state hereafter to the most flagitious criminals on Earth.

AS to the *Jews* 'tis true, they derived their light from a clearer Fountain, were under the *Oeconomy* of immediate Revelation, and therefore might be suppos'd to have had a freer prospect into that Heaven, from whence their *Law* descend-

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ed, yet even they were in this, as in many other particulars, under *Moses* his veil, had rather dark *adumbrations*, and those too overwhelmed with the multitude of expresse temporal promises. The earthly *Canaan* lay so fair and open to their prospect, as easily intercepted their view of the *Heavenly*; and their *faith* must remove, at least overlook, that *mountain* before it could come to any sight of the *Horizon* and extended *Sky*. Nay, when 'tis remembred that the *Sadduces* a great and learned part of their Doctors denied all future being, we must think the intimations of it were very obscure; it being scarce imaginable, that any considering men should think the *Souls* expir'd with the *Body* upon any other ground, but that they knew not what after State to assign it. So that though they wanted not *figures* and *shadows*, or as the Apostle calls them, *patterns of Heavenly things*, *Heb. 9. 23.* yet they seem'd not to have been well understood, and the generality of men were not only in their Persons, but their Understandings denied entrance into the *holy of holies*; penetrated not that mystical representation, which was within the *Veil*: and answerable to this dimness of their perceptions, was the whole *systeme* and *body* of their *Religion*, which rather entertain'd its self in those *external bodily* performances, which affected the *sense*, than in those *Divine* and *Spiritual* raptures, which purified and elevated the *Soul*. 'Tis the *Apostles* affirmation, *Heb. 9. that the sacrifices there offered could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining*

pertaining to the conscience, and he gives the reason in subjoyning, that they stood only in *meats and drinks*, and *carnal ordinances*. Alas what propriety had all their legal purifications towards the cleansing of the mind? That might be in the *Mire* while the body was in the *Laver*: and while the surface of the man was sprinkled with blood, the heart might be more bestial than those creatures who lent the *ablution*. And indeed if we consider their morality, we shall find that outside formal ceremony had proceeded to infect and poyson that also. The outward restraint, the bare forbearance of an actual commission, being by them thought a full compliance with all the Negative precepts: so that we see *Christ* is fain to assert the Internal part of the Obligation, and extend the duty to the thoughts and inclinations. Besides, those acts of *vertue* they perform'd were commonly such as had an Aspect, rather on their temporal well-being, than distant and unseen rewards, their Justice, and Charity confin'd to their own *Nation*, directed to the flourishing of their own *Common-wealth*: whereas *Aliens* were devoted to their rapine and despight; so that if they were *vertues*, they were rather *Political* than *Moral*, and indeed while they placed so much of their hopes on *Earth*, lookt on *secular* plenty and tranquillity as their reward, 'twas but consonant they should square their endeavours by that measure, and consider things not simply in their native properties of good or ill, but according to their tendency towards that they esteem'd their *felicity*. BUT

BUT God has provided, as the *Apostle* says, *Heb. 11. 40. better things for us*, has not only made a better Covenant with us, but has *establisht it upon better promises*, *Cap. 8. 6.* given us clearer revelations, not only of our *duty*, but our *recompence*, the veil in *Christ* is done away, and we all with open face, *Behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord*, *2 Cor. 3. 18.* The Gospel puts the evidences of our inheritance into our own hands, seal'd by his explicate and direct promise, who cannot lye: and that not only engag'd by way of *munificence*, but bargain and contract, as the purchase of that *price*, which our *Redeemer* fully paid in our behalf. And sure this is in the *Apostles* phrase *strong consolation*; and if so, it must be forcible encitement likewise, he cannot but run alacriously, who has the prize in his Eye, nor can *S. Paul* use a more pressing argument to his *Corinthians*, *To be stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, than this assurance, *That their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, *1 Cor. 15. 58.*

AND as this clear proposal of the *promises* is most proper to encourage and inspirit our endeavours, so is the conditionality most efficacious to necessitate and engage them. Had *Heaven* been only promis'd as a largess, and with a blind promiscuous bounty dispenc'd without discrimination, how much it might have rais'd our *gratitude*, I know not, but sure it would not have excited our *industry*, which in all instances we find is whetted by interest: and where that is otherwise

otherwise secur'd, men generally estimate it a part of the benefit that their labour is superseded; and please themselves no less in a lazy bequest, than a full enjoyment. So that indeed it is this circumstance of the *promises* that must give life to all the rest, and make them operative toward the producing of *good life*; for admit the *joys* we expect never so *Divine* and *Spiritual* for their kind; never so great and transcendent for degree, and these also represented to us in the most clear and convincing manner, yet if they be tendered not as objects of our choice, but the certainty of our fate, *felicities* which we are only concerned to enjoy, but not to acquire, they may make us glad, but surely not diligent; it being but a cold inducement to any undertaking to be assur'd 'tis perfectly needless: we have therefore all reason to confess it our greatest advantage towards *virtue*, that God has so linkt our *hopes* and our *duty* together: and indeed when we consider the great disproportion between the one and the other; the infinity of the *reward*, with the despicableness of the *service*, we must resolve that he had no other design in making his *promises* conditional, than to engage us by our interest to that *holiness*, to which he saw our inclinations did not bind us: that it was an artifice of his *love* to ensnare us into two *felicities* by proposing of one, enforce us to take one good in the way to another, *virtue* in passage to *glory*.

AND indeed who would not think this method so invincibly efficacious, as might supersede the  
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the necessity of any other, but God who understands our thoughts, long before, *Psal. 139. 1.* foresaw, that notwithstanding this proposal of a *Canaan*, there would be *Rubenites* and *Gadites*, who would set up their rest on this side of *Jordan*; so intent on the commodity of their *Cattle*, as to be content themselves to be part of the Herd, and become like the *Beasts that perish*: That there would be men of so ignoble, disingenuous tempers, as none of these cords of a man would be able to draw; and therefore there is another part of the *Gospel-Oeconomy* fitted to their capacities; the threats and interminations, those terrors of the Lord, which as Goads may drive those brutish Creatures who will not be attracted: that those who think themselves perfectly unconcern'd in *Dauids* question, *who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord, Psal. 24. 3.* may yet startle at *Esays*, *who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?* Of so formidable a kind are those menaces, as is sufficient to awake the most drowsie stupid Soul, and are most apt to operate upon that part of their temper, which evacuated the gentler method: that very sensuality which made them despise *Heaven*, may help to enhance the dread of *Hell*; the lack of a drop of water will be most insupportable to him who fared deliciously every day; those flames will be yet more scorching to those bodies, who by studious effeminacies and softness have superadded an artificial tenderness to the natural; nor will the gnawing of the worm appear more intolerable to any, than those who  
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here make it their business to tie up its *Jaws*, gag or stupify that *Conscience* which would now admonish, but will there torment. And when to this is added the *perpetuity* of these *pains*, that *the worm shall never die, the fire never be quencht*, certainly this puts such an edge upon the terror, as may well make it in the *Apostles* phrase, *quick and powerful, searching even to the dividing asunder of the Soul and Spirit, the joynts and marrow*. When we are assur'd that *the Axe is thus laid unto the root of the tree, and that every tree that brings not forth good fruit must be hewn down and cast into the fire*, we shall sure be warn'd to bring forth meet fruits of repentance, and fly from the wrath to come.

**BUT** because neither invitations nor threats can avail with those who are any way invincibly impeded to apply them to their benefit: since the most *glorious prize*, the most formidable danger, is insignificant to him, who wants power to run unto the one, or from the other; it has pleased God to inspire and actuate all his *Evangelical* methods, by a concurrence of *supernatural* strength, makes it not only eligible but possible, I may say easie and pleasant for us to do whatever he commands us: and notwithstanding our natural debility, makes us through *Christ* which strengthens us, *able to do all things*: by his Spirit he prevents, assists, restrains, excites, comforts, convinces; gives grace and adds to that the happier largess of a will to use it, and knowledge to discern the want of more: infusing to the *Soul* an ardent thirst of greater powers, and readier means  
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of service, which the performance actuates to greater strengths, and yet enflames to new desires, and more importunate pursuits, whilest God at once bestows and crowns his own donations; still giving unto him that has, till that at last he gives himself; and *grace is swallowed up in glory*. And to assure us of this aid, he has been pleased to oblige himself: descends to the solemnity of a *Pact and Covenant*; has indented with us, and constituted it a principle part of the new and everlasting *Covenant made with mankind in the blood of the Son of God, to send the comforter, his Holy Spirit, to be with us till the end of the world, and do all this*. So that the Gospel is at once the assigner of our tasks, and the *Magazine* of our strength; so much Spirit goes along with that Letter; so much internal grace is annexed to its outward administration, as will to all, who do not resist it, infallibly render it *the power of God to salvation*. For 'tis not the sole privilege of a *S. Paul*, but the common portion of all *Christians, That Gods grace shall be sufficient for them*; which is sure a more Gospel-like promise, than that it should be too strong for them: so violent and irresistible as to commit a rape upon their *Spirits*; such a mighty wind as drives them headlong upon duty. Indeed this competency is of all other proportions the most *incentive* to industry; we see in *Temporals*, too little makes men desperate, and too much careless; and certainly 'twould be the same in *Spirituals*: but now when we have stock enough to set up with, and that too of so improvable



vable a nature, that is capable of infinite advancement, and yet on the other side no less capable of total decay also, it being given with this express condition, that upon neglect it shall be withdrawn: so that our own sloth may make us *poor*, but nothing else can keep us from being abundantly *rich*: what can be imagin'd more animating to diligence and endeavour? And this being the condition wherein our *Christianity* has placed us, added to the former considerations, will beyond exception or *subterfuge*, evince its perfect aptitude and *fitness* for the End to which it was aim'd, *the Planting and nourishing all true Vertue among men*, the introducing the tree of life into the world again, and so forming us a *Paradise* even amidst the briers and thorns of our Exil'd state.

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CHAP. II.

*The Character of Christian-mens Practice, shewing their multiplied failance both from the rule of that holy profession, and its genuine effect.*

**A**ND now who can suspect that a *cause* so rightly dispos'd, should miss of its effect? That this so *auspicious Planet* should be counter-influenc't by any *malevolent Star*? Or that what has so many tenures in us, should be finally disseis'd? For, admit we have not the Piety

to be prevail'd upon by the reverence of the *Author*; yet the excellency of its *composition* does so much recommend it to our reason, that we must put off the best part of our *Nature* to evacuate the force of our Religion: nay, supposing us to have done that too, to have struck our selves out of the list of *Rationals*, yet if we keep but the rank of *Animals*, if we have not extinguish'd passion and sense, it descends even to them; addresses to our hopes and fears with most importunate sollicitations, and convincing motives: So that unless we have the absurd ill luck to have much of the *Stoick*, and nothing of the *Philosopher*, 'twill be impossible to resist its impressions, and sure he that contemplates *this*, will be apt with some confidence to conclude *Christendom* to be the *Goshen* of the world, not only in respect of its *light*, but of its *immunity* from all those *Locusts* and *Caterpillars*, those swarms of mean and sordid Vices which both cover and devour the rest of the *Earth*.

BUT this must be the inference of a meer *contemplative*, a Recluse that converses only with his own meditations: for let him be so much *secular*, as once to look abroad, the most *transient* glance will serve to unravel all this hopeful *speculation*, & shew him that *Christendom* may be as much *Heathen* as *America*: whereas 'tis usually said, that ill *Manners* produce good *Laws*, we have revers'd the *Aphorism*, and our good *Law* has introduc'd the most corrupt manners. Our holy *faith* which like a foundation should support good works,

works, has like a gulf *swallowed* them up. And so universal a depravation is there among us, that we have scarce any thing left to distinguish us from the most barbarous people, but a better name and worse vices.

AND here, what terms of wonder or of grief can be significant enough to express or to bewail, so strange and so perverse degeneration, that the *light* of the world should thus darken it: the *salt* of the *Earth* be the means of putrifying and corrupting it: that those who were by God drawn out from the *Heathen* world should so outvie the *Gentiles* crimes, as if they had forsaken them, only because they were too *innocent*. This indeed is one of *Satans* subtillest stratagems, to fill *Christ's Camp* thus with his *Souldiers*, by whose intestine treacheries, he has been more *triumphant* than by all his open assaults and avowed hostilities. What a late *States-man* said (*Prophetically*, if we may judge by the event) of *England*, that it was a *vivacious animal that could never dye except it kill'd it self*, is no less true of the *Church*, which has always been *invulnerable* against all *darts*, but what have been taken out of its own *quiver*. Of this the *Primitive* times were pregnant testimonies, where all the most witty cruelties, the most bloody persecutions, never made any breach in her: but she stood firmer for all those batteries, and like an Arch'd Building, became more strong and compact, by that weight which was design'd to crush her: but the *Vice* of *Professors* undermines her very foundation,

tion, and does as much exceed the *destructiveness* of the most hostile assaults, as intestine *treachery* is more ruinous and fatal, than foreign *violence*.

AS long as the *lives* of Christians were the *transcripts* of their doctrine they render'd it venerable to all, and gave a presumption there was something more than *humane* in it, that could work such signal *effects*, that could so transform *men* as to make the *adulterer* chaste, the *drunkard* temperate, the *covetous* liberal, the *contentious* peaceable. *This*, this was the way to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*, as the Apostle speaks, *Tit. 2. 10*. And then the *rule of contraries* directs us to conclude very distant *effects* from our now so distant *practices*, that our very *religion* should partake of the *infamy* of our lives, and be thought rather a *mystery of iniquity* than *godliness*.

THUS is *Christ* wounded in the house of his *friends*, and has more *reproach* cast on him by those that *profess* his name, than by the loudest *blasphemies* of those that *oppose* it. For when those who have not opportunity to examine our *faith*, see the enormousness of our *works*, what should hinder them from measuring the *Master*, by the *disciples*? it being scarce imaginable that any one *Sect* of men should so universally run counter to all the rules of their profession: For let any *sober* Heathen look upon *Christendom*, as it is at *this day* weltring in the bloud, not of *Martyrdom* but *War*, and will it be possible for him  
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to think it owns a Gospel of *Peace*; or that those who so perpetually do those outrages they are unwilling to suffer, profess obedience to the *Royal Law* of *love thy neighbour as thy self*, Jam. 2. 8. Can he see the violence and oppressions, the frauds and underminings, the busie *scramblings* for little parcels of *Earth*; and yet believe we count our selves *strangers* and pilgrims in it, and have laid up our treasure in *Heaven*? Can he observe the strange and almost universal distortion of speech, whereby it has lost its native property of being *interpreter* of the mind, and under *intelligible* words so far exhibits the *Babel* confusion, that no man understands anothers meaning? And can he *imagine* we have any such *Precept*, as *lye not one to another*, or any such *penalty* upon the infringer, as *exclusion from the new Jerusalem*? Shall he hear our God mention'd more frequently and earnestly in our *imprecations* than our *prayers*, and every part of our crucified *Saviour*, recrucified in our horrid *oaths*; and shall he not think that his *second* executioners bear him as little reverence as his *first*: or that he has given no such *command* as *swear not at all*? When he discerns *self preservation* bow'd to as the *Supreme Law*, can he ever dream of another so inconsistent *obligation* as that of *taking up the cross*? Or that *suffering for righteousness sake* is one of our greatest *felicities* when he sees us run so affrighted from it, that no crime, perjury, rebellion, murder, is block enough in our way to stop our flight? In *fine*, when he considers how

much of our business it is, first to excite, and then to cloy the flesh, to spurr it on to riots even beyond its own propensions, that the whole year is but one mad carnival, and we are *voluptuous* not so much upon *desire* or appetite, as by way of *exploit* and bravery: when I say he considers this, can he possibly guess our *institution* directs us to beat down the body, to *mortifie the flesh with the affections and lusts*, interdicts us all *rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness*, and all *provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*. Certainly all rules of discourse will direct him to the quite contrary conclusion. And when he sees a Set of men that have enhans'd the common humane pravity, he will be apt to infer their Principles have taught them the improvement: And upon that supposal he wanted not temptation to his Option that said, *Let my soul be with the Philosophers*.

AND while we thus misrepresent our holy profession to *others*, it will be no wonder if we finally do it to *our selves*, that we forget its *native shape*, and look on her only in the *ugly dress* our selves have put on, and that effect seems already too visible among us: our lives have so long confuted it that we triumph over it as a baffled thing; and like *Amnon* loath it because we have ravish'd and defil'd it. Many of us take notice of the better Morals of *Turks* and *Infidels* not in reproach of our selves but our Religion, and because we have so many *Lepers*, think *Abanah* and *Pharphar*, better than all the waters of *Israel*,  
this



this is openly in the *mouths* of many, but is so prodigiously *irrational* as well as *unjust*, that one can scarce think it possible to be in their *hearts*, unless they be pursued by the fate of habitual lyars, that at last come to perswade themselves.

CERTAINLY there is no other parallel instance wherein men conclude so perversely: he that shews a man that precipice upon whose brink he stands, that intreats, yea importunes him to retire from the *danger*; nay bribes him with the greatest rewards to chuse *safety*, has done all that can be expected from a friend, or charitable man: and if after all, the wretched person so advis'd, shall cast himself headlong upon ruine; assuredly no *Inquest* would return his murder in any other *form* than that of *Felo de se*. And why then should our Christianity be accus'd of those ills which it would infallibly averr, if our obstinacy would permit it: indeed the charge is so wilde, that it seems rather design'd as an artifice of diversion, a sprout of that first fig-tree which was to hide the nakedness of lapsed *Adam*. Men think it policy to transfer their guilts, and are willing, the *violence* of their lusts should pass for the *impotence* of their religion. Like irregular *patients* blaming their *Physician* for those ill accidents which they know owing only to their own unruliness. A pregnant testimony of the reproachful nature of sin, that men are content to betake themselves to the most forlorn shifts to avoid the owning it: but the



consciousness is so pressing and intolerable, that with many it drives on to yet higher outrages: 'tis not enough for men to decry their *Christianity* as a feeble *insignificant* thing, but they load it even with contradictory *imputations*, and that which sometimes they call *the foolishness of preaching*, to bring it in scorn and contempt, shall at another be stiled an *Art* and *trick* to bring it into suspicion and hatred, be arraign'd for imposture and deceit, a project of imposing upon credulous souls, and gaining real advantages to the managers while they feed the silly *Profelyte* with imaginary ones. How groundless a calumny this is, as it appears from the sanctity, and eminent simplicity of Christian Religion, which above all things excludes fraud and falshood; so also from the designments and aims of its first promulgators, who as they can not be suppos'd dextrous enough to lay such a scene of taking Pageantry; so all their visible acquests were scourgings and imprisonments, persecutions and death. If this were the case it would indeed go near to reconcile the before mention'd contradictory *imputations*, whilst the imposing upon credulous souls at this dear rate, would be in very deed *the foolishness of Preaching*, the greatest madness in the world. Men of common reason would be asham'd to use such frivolous cavils: but who can without horror hear them from profess't Christians? that while *Infidels* are modest in their reproaches, look upon our Doctrine only as erroneous, *Disciples* should be bitter and charge it as insidious and trea-

treacherous. Thus does the *Church* experiment the truth of her blessed *Lords Predictions*, and finds her *foes are those of her own house*: and though she be *Christs Dove*, yet is subjected to the fate of the *Viper*, and has her bowels torn out by those that spring from them.

THESE are the growing consequences of *resolute impiety*, he who will not be kept within the bounds of *duty*, seldom contents himself with that bare violation: he not only *breaks the bonds in sunder*, but *casts them away* too; is impatient they should keep a reputation to upbraid him, when he has rob'd them of the power of restraining him: and *this* sure is the bottom of all that deep reasoning, by which men have learnt to argue themselves and others out of their *Creed*: And though this be indeed the great *Arcanum* the *Philosophers Stone* they aim at; yet they have met with another good experiment by the way: and have, by I know not what *Chimistry*, extracted a reputation out of these most unapt *materials*. He passes for a considering man that disputes principles, and is thought most to own his *reason* that least owns his *faith*: and then 'twill be no wonder if this success animate, and give them not only confidence, but vanity to avow what is thus creditable.

Indeed Satan is too subtle a manager to lose this advantage, and the event sadly shews, he has not neglected to improve it, as appears not only by the number of such pretenders unto reason, but even by their advancing to higher degrees.

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The *voluptuary* who *likes* his portion in this world, and *fears* that in another, is at first only prompted by his interest to quarrel the *last Articles* of the *Creed*, and so in his own defence denies the *life everlasting*: but when he finds his necessity made a virtue, and himself struck into the repute of a wit; upon that account he doubts not, his fame will encrease with his irreligion, and so proceeds still to unravel farther, till at last he leaves not so much as *I believe in God*, that many have advanc'd so far is too evident: and by some so own'd that they will not thank his charity, that shall hope better of them.

T W A S once the *triumph* of infant Christianity, that it silenc'd all the *Heathen Oracles*, and within a while demolish'd even the *Synagogue* too: but alas its mature age gives us that effect in a most inverted sense, it now has serv'd to suppress even the common notions of a *Deity*, turn'd out the *one* as well as the *many* Gods, and instead of *Polytheists* and *Idolaters* has made *Atheists*, and that which Christ tells us was design'd to *perfect and fill up the Law*, has by the strange pravity of its professors at once obliterated both *Law* and *Law-giver* out of mens minds, thereby exemplifying the old Axiom, *Corruptio optimi est pessima*; and the Saint as well as the *Angel*, if he desert his innocence, commences *Feind* and *Devil*. These are such sad, such direful transmutations as excite not so much wonder, as grief and lamentation; and  
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what rivers, what Oceans of Tears are competent to bewail such unutterable evils.

THE removal of the *Candlestick* is so formidable a *judgement* that the threatening of it, is us'd by Christ as the most awaking menace to the Seven Churches *Revel. 2. 3.* but the removing it by our own hands is yet an enhancement of that highest calamity; when men are come to such an insensate obduration, that they court their *Plagues*, become their own *Lictors* and make that their *choice* which is their extremest *punishment*, they are certainly too secure of that ruine they call for; And may we not fear it may prove *general*, and involve us all: that while so *many* cry out to be deliver'd from their Christianity as their load and pressure, and so *few* express their dissent to that demand: God may in judgment grant it, hearken to those that cry loudest, rescue his Gospel from our profane and impious violations and give it to others that may bring forth the fruits of it.

NOR is this to be fear'd only from the *explicite* importunities of the blasphemous, for it is interpretatively the vote of many others; whoever give themselves up to the dominion of any lust, do *implicitly* renounce their obedience to Christ, and say *we will not have this man to rule over us.* And when he is thus depos'd from his *regal* and directive power, we have reason to believe he will despise a meer *titular* sovereignty, not suffer the Scepter of his Word to remain as an *Empty Ceremony* among those, who pay it no  
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real obedience : nor be again cloath'd with Purple, crown'd, and saluted King to advance the triumph of his scorn and crucifixion.

Nor will the fawning Professions of the demure hypocrite *avert*, but *accelerate* this Fate : He that makes the *Golden Scepter* in Christs hand, a *rod of iron* in his own, that thinks his *Saintship* licenses him to all the severe censures, and the yet severer (because more effective) *oppressions* of others, he is certainly to be lookt on not only as a Rebel, but an Usurper too, and is of all others the highest provoker. He that *tramples* under foot the Son of God, does not so much violate him, as he that *pretends* to erect him a Throne upon blood and rapine, on perjury and sacrilege : nor does he that accounts the Blood of the *Covenant* an *unholy* thing, so much profane it, as he that uses it as a *Varnish* to paint over his foulest lusts. The Apostle has long since told us, *there is no concord between Christ and Belial*, and can we think he will be patient thus to be made subservient to his enemy : or suffer his *Ark* to be set for the *support*, which should be the *confusion* of *Dagon*. Do we find him so severely upbraid the hypocrisie of the *Jews*, that *stole*, *murdered*, *committed adultery*, and *swore falsely*, and yet came and stood before him in his house, Jer. 7. 9. and shall we hope he will connive at it in Christians ? Was it intolerable profanation in them to *account* his house a den of robbers, and shall we be permitted to *make* it so : they are sent to *Shiloh* to read their  
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own destiny, and surely we are as likely to find ours there too; to be deprived of those advantages which we have so unworthily abus'd: nor can we expect, that though God cause the natural *Sun to rise still as well on the evil as the good*, yet that the *Sun of righteousness* shall continue to shine on those who will only bask themselves in his Rays, grow *Æthiops* from his neighbourhood; but will not work by his light.

WHEN all this is consider'd, what a sad abode does it make? When the *blasphemies* of the Profane, the *sensualities* of the Voluptuous, and the *mockeries* of the Hypocrite, send, as it were, daily challenges to Heaven, we cannot but look it should at last *overcome* its long-suffering, *awake* God to vindicate the honour of his Name, and not suffer it any longer to be thus prostituted and polluted: that when he sees his light serve only to aid us the more subtilly to contrive our deeds of darkness, he should withdraw it, smite us with blindness like the *Sodomites*, whom he finds in such impure pursuits: and were that *blindness* such as our Saviour speaks of, *Jo. 9. 41.* that inferr'd the *no sin*, 'twere a desirable infliction, but alas it has none of that property: That which is design'd for the punishment can never be the *extenuation* of our guilt; but as in Hell there is an *unhappy Separation of effects*, the scorching of the *flame* without the light, and the blackness of *night* without the rest: so in this nearest approach to it; this Portal to those Chambers of death, there is the ignorance without the excuse,  
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the darkness divested of its native quality of hiding: and when we are enter'd among *Heathens* here, we must yet expect the sadder portion of *Apostatiz'd* Christians hereafter.

AND O that this *consideration* might at last have its proper *operation*, rouse and awake us timely to prevent those evils which it will be impossible to cure. That by bringing forth some more *genuine* and kindly fruits, we may avert that *dismal* sentence, *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground.* That men would generally lay to heart both the *sin* and infamy of being *promoters of public ruin*; and quench that *fire* with their tears which their sins have kindled, that the fasting and prayers, the sighs and groans of the *Primitive* Christians may supplant the profane luxuries, the carnal Jollities of the *Modern*: and that Sackcloth and Ashes may become the *universal mode*, the only *fashionable* dress among us. This both Reason and Religion suggest as matter of our most importunate wishes; would God our hopes were but half as pregnant.

BUT the *less appearance* there is of this universal reformation, the *more jealousy* ought every single person to look on himself, lest he be one that obstruct it: for so he does who stays till it be a *fashion*, but neglects to contribute his part to the making it so. Men are willing to discourage themselves from attempts of this kind, and with an unseasonable modesty can reflect what a nothing one man is to so many millions, when alas all that vast Empire Vice has got in the world,



world, is founded in the pravity of single persons, & would certainly be ruin'd by their reformation. The more reasonable Collection would be, that he who considers himself but as *one*, should not suffer himself to grow into *less*; to fall from that *Unit* to a *Cypher*, by permitting sloth or cowardize to enfeeble and Emasculate him, but on the contrary should recollect his spirits, actuate all his strength, and therefore be sure to do his utmost, because that *utmost* is but a *little*.

AND to this certainly there want not encouragements, we see in common affairs the wonders that industry and resolution are able to effect, and a *single* courage being exerted has often without *Romance*, overcome *giantly* difficulties. 'Tis a great prejudice is cast upon vertue by the pusillanimity of those that *like*, but dare not *abet* her. When most men commit all impieties daringly, and openly, and those few that do mourn for it, do it but in secret, the example of the *one* is contagious, but the *other* has no means to diffuse its self. Would men stoutly own *duty*, and not like *Peter*, follow *Christ* *afar off*, they might yet hope to make a party and *gain ground* in the world. And how noble an attempt were this, thus to encounter Satan in his highest triumph, and recover a *lost field*: and methinks those who have any *warmth* of Piety glowing within, may easily thus improve it into a *flame*, ἐπιχορησάτω ἐν τῇ πίσει τὸ ἄπει-  
τὸν, *adde to their faith vertue*, as that signifies *courage*: and then readily would succeed, that train of Christian excellencies reckon'd up by  
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*St. Peter, 2 Ep. 1. 5. knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, and superstruct on these, as it there follows, brotherly kindness, and the most comprehensive charity.* We should be not only devout towards *God*, but zealous towards *Men*, endeavouring by all prudent means to recover them out of those snares of the Devil, whereby they are taken captive. And since among all those snares there is none more entangling, than the creditableness and repute of customary vices, to set themselves especially against that overgrown covering and ornament; those *Locks* wherein its great, its *Sampson-like strength* lies: and strive to render it as contemn'd as it is base: and to this purpose nothing is so apt, as the exalting its competitor, fetching vertue out of the Dungeon, that darkness and obscurity wherein it has long lain forgotten, and by making it illustriously visible in their *own* practice, put it into the possibility of attracting *others*. Indeed there only it appears in its true splendor, they are but dead colours the Sublimest speculation can put on it, he that would draw it to the life, must imprint it upon his own. And thus every pious person may, nay ought to be a *Noah*, a preacher of righteousness: and if it be his fortune to have as imperwasible an Auditory, if he cannot avert the *deluge*, it will yet be the providing himself an *Ark*, the delivering, yea advancing his *own* soul, if he cannot benefit *other mens*.

NAY, this being a *Noah* may qualifie him to be a *Moses* too, give him such an *interest* with  
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Heaven, ~~that~~ he may be fit to stand in the gap, to be an *intercessor* and Mediator for a provoking people. And God knows never any generation more needed that *office* : nor any part of this more than our sinful Nation, which having long been in the *furnace*, is indeed now come out, but so unpurified, that we have all reason to expect a return, and that not upon the former frustrated design of *refining* ; but upon that more infallible and fatal one of *consuming* us. This is so dreadful, but withal so just an expectation, that if there be any *Jacobs* among us ; any, *who can wrestle and prevail with God*, there never was so pressing need of their intercession. O let all that are thus fitted for it, vigorously undertake this pious work, let no *Moses's* hands ever wax heavy, but be always held up in a devout importunity, let them transcribe that holy Oratory, which he so often effectually used, plead to God his own cause, with a *what wilt thou do to thy great Name*, and when there is nothing in us that can pretend to any thing but vengeance, ransack Gods *bosom*, rifle his *bowels* for arguments of *compassion*, repeat to him his own *titles*, that he is *long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, Numb. 14. 18.* And by these solícite, yea, conjure him to pity. And how great an ardency is required to this intercession ? What *strong* cries must they be that shall drown so loud a clamor of impieties. And how does it reproach the slighthness of our sleepy heartless addressees ? Can we hope to bind Gods hands

with Withs and Straws? To arrest his vengeance with such faint and feeble assaults? And when *nature and danger* suggest to *Heathen Nineveh*, not only to cry, but cry *mightily* to God, shall the superaddition of our Religion damp ours into a *whisper*, a soft *unaudible* sound. A storm will teach the profane Mariner to pray in earnest, and alas, we have not wanted that discipline. 'Tis not long since we might have said with those, *Acts 27. No small tempest has long lain on us, neither Sun nor Stars in many days*, nay in many years *appearing*, nothing but black and dismal portents of a final wreck to a poor weather-beaten Church, and then sure 'twas time to be importunate, to learn so much of instruction from the waves that tossed us, as to make our prayers keep pace with them, in swift uninterrupted succession, in loud and not to be resisted violence. That we did so *then* I dare not affirm, but sure I am the necessity of it is not yet out-dated; for though the Sky however black with clouds carry no thunder in it, though the impetuous winds that blow from every quarter, should not break out in tempest, and bring shipwreck to us; yet we too fully exemplify the truth of the *Prophets Axiome, That the wicked are like the troubled Sea, that cannot rest*: we have *within* us a principle of ruine, which can operate though nothing from *without* excite it. A tempest is not always necessary to sink a Ship, one treacherous leak may do it in the greatest calm, and what security can there then be to our torn Vessel, whose rents our continued divisions

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do still keep open. Indeed our *preservation* must be as our *restoration* was, the work of Omnipotence; thither therefore let us address with *St. Peters* pathetick Prayer, *Save Lord or we perish.* O that all who are concern'd in the grant of that Petition, would qualifie themselves to present it. Lift up such pure hands, *that God who hears not sinners, Jo. 9.* may yet hear them, afford a gracious ear, and give an answer of *Peace.*

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### CHAP. III.

*A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Inconsideration.*

**T**HE last Section having defeated all the promising hopes of the former, by shewing us how sadly we have frustrated all the designs and engagements of our profession, enervated all those apt and powerful methods, and how perfectly contrary our *practices* are to our *rules*, mere curiosity would more prompt us to enquire what are the hidden *causes* of those so strange *effects*, what unhappy propriety there is in the *soil*, that after so much *culture* and husbandry it should produce nothing but *wild Grapes*: and by what arts and wiles Satan has not only evaded, but even retorted those blows which were aim'd at him. But as in *diseases* the *pains* and

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languishings are obvious to the grossest sense, but the *springs* and originals of them most frequently lye deep, and are so complicated and interwoven, that they require much art to search and to distinguish them: nay, do often mock the most subtile inquisitor, and send him back with meer conjectures and uncertain gesses: so in this *Epidemick* Spiritual distemper, the *malady* is notorious and visible, but the *causes* of it not so easily determin'd, yet that not so much from the darkness as the number of them; so many do pretend, and that with very good colour, to this unhappy, this monstrous birth, that a *Solomon* himself must have made the proposal of dividing it, as not being able to have assign'd it entire to any one Mother.

INDEED so many are the concurrents towards it, that it would far exceed the limits of this little Tract, but to point at them: I shall not therefore undertake any such *exact* enumeration, but shall only take notice of those which either for the generality or degree of their efficacy appear the most *eminent*.

AND first the great and stupid *Inconsideration* which most men have concerning their Religion, may well pass for a main cause of its frustration. *Christianity* may make *Archimedes* his challenge, give it but where it may set its foot, allow but a sober advertence to its proposals, and it will move the whole world: it comes with most invincible and controuling arguments, but still they are arguments, and those must first obtain  
attention,

attention, before they can force *assent*; they will most infallibly weigh down the *scales*, though the whole world were the *counter-balance*, but then that must presuppose their being put into those Scales: being entertain'd with so much of deliberation, as may try and examine their weight. In a word, they address to us as men, that is *creatures* endued by God, with *rational* Souls and discursive faculties, but if we will suppress these, and set up only the *brute* to give audience, we must not expect *Balaams* prodigy shall be every day repeated, that the *beast* should be wiser than the *rider*, and consequently cannot wonder if the Success vary with the Auditors.

AND 'tis to be fear'd, this is the state of most of us, that all the convincing *Logick*, that *demonstration of the Spirit*, as *St. Paul* calls it: and all the perswasive *Rhetorick* of the Gospel, find us so stupid and unconcern'd, that they can make no impression: all the *avenues* are so blockt up, that they can find no way of approaching us. We are like the *Indian Serpents Phyllostratus* mentions, proof against all charms, but such as with their glittering splendor assault our Eyes: nothing moves us but what courts our Senses, and what is not *gross enough* to be seen, we think *too nice* to be consider'd. The form and name of Christianity men find ready to their hands, and it costs them no labour to put it on: but should they be interrogated of the import and significancy of it, I fear many would be at a loss what to answer. Men call themselves *Christians*



as they do *French* or *English*, only because they were born within such a territory, take up their *Religion* as a part of their *fate*, the temper of their *Climate*, the entail of their *Ancestors*, or any thing most remote from their choice, the profession of it descends to them by way of inheritance, and like young careless Heirs, they never are at the charge to survey it, to inform themselves either of the *Issues*, or *Revenues* of it; what burdens it lays or what advantages it promises. Every man sees they are vast multitudes that have entered the *Baptismal* vow, and I fear no small numbers of them, that weigh it as little when they should perform it, as they did when they made it. Have no other notion of *Baptism*, but as a *custom* of the place, or a *time* of festivity: consider no farther significance in these spiritual bands, than they do in the Swadling-cloaths of their infancy, and can give no better account why they took on them *Christs* livery, than why they wear such garments as the common fashion of their Country prescribes them.

THIS is in many the effect of gross ignorance, that really know nothing that borders upon Religion: and where that is the *principle*, we cannot think it strange to see their *practices* proportionable; this returns them into the state of *Heathenism*, and while they walk in that darkness, it is no wonder if they often fall: the only matter of admiration is, that there should be any such darkness among us; that *the glorious light*, as *St. Paul* terms it, of the *Gospel* of *Christ*, should

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not long ere this have dispell'd it out of our *Horizon*, and certainly that it has not, must be owing to some very great guilt, so that concerning such persons the Disciples question, *Jo. 9.* is very pertinent, *Who did sin, this man or his Parents?* Where men are so ignorant it must necessarily infer their *Parents* negligence in infusing, or their *own* stubborn perverseness in resisting instruction, but 'tis more probable to conclude the former, since if Children were early instituted, knowledge would insensibly insinuate its self, before their years had arm'd them with obstinacy enough to make head against it: but when by the Parents remissness the proper Seeds-time is lost; the soil grows stiffe and untractable; the *labour* of learning averts their Childhood, and the *shame* of it their Manhood, and so they grow old in their ignorance, are ready to *leave* this world before they come to *know* any thing of that which is to succeed it. This is a *common*, but certainly a most *deplorable* case; and as it loudly accuses those Parents, who thus wretchedly hazard their Childrens greatest concernments, so certainly it reflects not very laudably upon those, who by slighting that excellent Order of *Confirmation* in this Church, have besides all other advantages of it, robb'd them of that happy reserve, which the care of their *Spiritual* Parent, had provided to repair the negligence of their *Natural*; but guilt has a miserable kind of infinity, and lessens not by being communicated; and therefore though these unknowing persons may with justice enough

*accuse* others, yet can they never the more *absolve* themselves. Indeed they cannot tax others omisions towards them, without a tacite reproach of their own : for if it were a fault in the *Parent*, to let their infancy want those necessary infusions, 'tis surely so in *themselves*, to let their riper years continue in that destitution. And sure 'tis not probable there could be a more irrational motive to the *former*, than that which prevails with the *later* ; to wit, the fear of shame, which certainly much more properly belongs to him that lies stupidly under his want, than he that industriously sets to cure it : so that while they go thus preposterously to *avert* reproach, they *invite* it ; nay, and do besides betray one of their most important secrets, discover themselves more solicitous about *appearances* than *realities* ; to be *thought* knowing than to *be* so. A strange kind of *speculative* Hypocrisie, which yet leads to all the *practical* profaneness incident to those, *who live without God in the world.*

BUT would God the unchatechiz'd were the only persons we had to complain of in this matter : There is another sort as *ignorant*, who have not that plea ; who by a wretchless *Inconsideration*, have made a shift to *unlearn* what they had once been *taught*. That this is naturally very possible no man can question, that observes how *desuetude* will rob a man of any Science, or other habit. But in this case there is yet a farther concurrent towards it, Christs parable tells us of *Fowles that devoured the Seed*, which himself interprets to be  
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the *wicked one*, which catcheth away the word sow'n in mens hearts : When that spiritual seed lies loose and scatter'd upon the surface, and is not by deep and serious meditation, harrowed as it were into the ground, it offers it self a ready prey to the devourer, and God knows the *event* is too ready to attest the *truth* of the observati-on : For do we not see *many* whose childhoods have wanted nothing of Christian nurture, that have had all advantages to the making them *wise unto salvation*, yet suffer their manhood to wear out and obliterate all those *rudiments* of their youth ; and that not only out of their *practice*, but even out of their *memory* too : this (would we be patient to have the experiment made) would, I doubt not, be found too true in divers, and they would appear less able to approve themselves not only to the *Confessor*, but even to the *Cate-chist* in their *adult age*, than they were in their *Minority* : as having scarce ever thought of the principles of their religion, since they conn'd them to avoid correction ; and then 'tis no wonder if they pass into the same *forgetfulness* with other the occurrences of that *slippery* age.

BUT if with some the *memory* have been so invincibly *faithful*, as not to have resign'd its *depositum* : if it do happen obstinately to retain those early impressions which were made on it. Yet alas that alone will be of little avail : 'tis true that is the store-house, and 'tis good to have that well replenisht ; but if its *plenty* be only within its self uncommunicated, if the gra-  
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nary though never so full, be seal'd up, it gives no security against a *famine*: a mans remembrance of his *Creed* may tell him there is a *God*, and that he is *Almighty*; but if his reason be so much a sleep, as not to infer from thence the necessity of reverencing and obeying him who is all powerful to revenge our contempts: he may repeat the *Article* every day and yet never the less *Atheistically*. In like manner he may go on to the *Birth*, *Death*, and *Resurrection* of *Christ*, but if he weigh not the obligations to gratitude and duty which devolve on him from thence he may remember his *Birth*, and yet never be regenerate: his *Death*, and yet not dye to sin: and his *Resurrection*, and yet lie rotting in his own corruption, and not rise with him to newness of life. So he may proceed to his coming to Judge the quick and the dead, but if he reflect not on his own particular concernment in it, if he consider not that for every the secretest thing, *Eccl. i. i.* God will bring him, as well as others to judgment: he may talk of *Dooms-day* as men do of such *Affizes* as they have no trial at, but it will never set him a trembling, or give him the providence to anticipate his sentence; so judge himself here, that he may not be judged of the Lord. And so proportionably in all the parts of our Christian Faith: he that does not extract from them their proper and just inferences, shall never feel their efficacy. He has indeed in that excellent *Systeme*, a most infallible *Catholicon*, against all his spiritual Maladies, but 'tis a Medicine, not a Charm;

Charm; to be taken, not laid by him; and if he fail in *application*, he will as certainly miss of the *cure*: and this gives us one too clear a reason, why *so many*, in the most fatal sense, are *weak and sick among us, and slain asleep*; are first *lethargick*, and then *stark dead in trespasses and sins*. Men do not by sober consideration suck out the vertue which would heal them: they look on the Creed as *Christs badge*, and so long as they bear that they think none must question their *Christianity*: whereas 'tis indeed more properly his *Military Symbolum*, or recognition of the cause, and General they fight for; an engaging them to all the obedience, fidelity and constancy of resolute souldiers: and to this purpose it is that we *stand up* at the recital of the Creed, as owing our Baptismal promise to *fight* manfully under our Saviours *Banner* against *Sin*, the *World*, and the *Devil*; and if we do not thus, 'tis not material what professions we make, we are the same desertors whether we *stay* in our own Camp, or *run over* to the enemies; *throw away* our Arms, or *not use* them; *renounce* our Christian faith, or *not improve* it. Sloth is as mischievous in war as treachery or cowardize, and he that keeps his *sword* in the *sheath*, is as unformidable an enemy, as he that brings *none* into the *field*.

AND how many such insignificant *combattants* are there in the Christian Camp: that only lend their *Names* to fill up the *Muste-roll*: but never dream of going upon *service*. 'Tis certain



certain there are as many such, as there are care-  
 less unconsidering Professors: and these 'tis to  
 be fear'd make so great a number, that were the  
 Church put to estimate her *forces*, and examine  
 what effectively her *strength* is, she would find  
 the deceit of *false musters* as great among the *Spi-  
 ritual* as the *Civil* Souldiery. It is indeed a  
 most amazing thing to see, that that which is  
 the one great and important interest of all men,  
 should of all other things meet with the least  
 regard. If we make a proposal of worldly pro-  
 fit, though incumbred with many difficulties and  
 liable to many uncertainties, we shall not only  
 have an attentive hearing, but active care and di-  
 ligent pursuit of the design, it will be driven to  
 the last glimpse of hope and if the first attempt  
 miscarry, the next occasion is laid hold of; but  
 here where the *prize* is so rich, the *conditions* so  
 easie, the *acquest* so certain, yet (as if these were  
 deterring, averting qualities) we cannot be got  
 to take the matter into our deliberation. Alas,  
 what stupid folly has possess'd men? and by what  
*measures* do they make their *estimates*? how are  
 their precious Souls become so vile in their eyes,  
 that they are the only part of them, which they  
 think below their regard? In an *Epidemick* dis-  
 ease every man looks out for *Antidote* or Me-  
 dicine for his own peculiar, and does not ac-  
 quiesce in that silly confidence that he shall do  
 as well as other men: yet in this greater danger,  
 that is their avowed comfort, and keeps them as  
 cheerful as if they had the most solid grounds of  
 security.



security. Alas, can numbers *out-face* damnation, or do men hope that by going in troops to hell they shall *master* the native inhabitants, *subdue* those legions of tormentors, and become *conquerors* in stead of *sufferers*? This is sure too wild an imagination for any to entertain, yet what more sober one can any pretend, in favour of so stupendous an improvidence?

BUT 'twill be much more seasonable to *reform* than *Apologize* or *Rhetoricate*; and therefore 'twill import those men, who like the inhabitants of *Lais*, dwell *careless*, quiet, and secure, to look about them: to enter into *serious* consultation how they may avert that ruine which waits upon such a supine temper, not to suffer themselves to perish in the midst of such possibilities, nay solicitations to be saved: but at last afford an audience to that Embassie which is sent them from Heaven. Ponder well those *easy* terms of reconciliation which are propos'd: the *inestimable advantages* consequent to the embracing that amity; and the as *inestimable detriment* of refusing it: in a word, not to please themselves with the *empty title*, but to penetrate the *full purport* and significancy of their Christianity, and when they have done this soberly and attentively: having removed this first and most general obstruction to piety, they will find themselves assaulted by such force of *reason* that they must either be very ill *Logicians*, or very good *Christians*.

## CHAP. IV.

*A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from Partial Consideration.*

NEXT to the *stupid* and meerly vegetable state of total incogitancy: we may rank that *partial* and peece-meal consideration, by which Christianity is mutilated and deform'd, depriv'd of all its force to attract and subdue mens hearts: for as in *artificial* Movements, there is such a dependance of one part upon another, that the substracting of any one destroys the whole frame: so in this *spiritual* Machin design'd to raise our dull mortality to heaven; the divine wisdom of its maker has combin'd its several parts, that he who severs ruines, he that applies it not in its united strength will find no aid from its unjoynted scattered particles. S. Paul tells us 1 Cor. 12. that in the natural body the making it all Eye, or Hand, the reducing the many members to one is destructive to its being (if they were all one member where were the body v. 20.) and we in reason must expect the same event will follow here. If we advance one part of our Christian Faith to the annihilation of the rest, 'tis impossible that should supply the place of the whole; but the more that member is swoln above its native size, the more *unwildy*, not the more *strong* it grows: and loses that active vigor, which

which it receiv'd by a social communication with the other parts.

'TIS Gods charge against the *Priests*, *Mal*, 2. that *they have been partial in the Law*, מִן פְּנֵי אֲנָפִים מִן פְּנֵי לִפְתֵּי לִפְתֵּי lifters up of faces in it; preferr'd *some* more agreeable parts, and discountenanc'd *others*; were not *only* judges of the Law, but *unjust* judges too. And I fear the enditement may now run more generally against the People also; that they have been partial in the Gospel: culled and chosen out those softer and more gentle dictates which should less grate and disturb them: like well the *Oil* that makes them have a cheerful countenance, but are not so forward to deal with the *Wine* which should search and cleanse their sores. We make all our addressees to the *promises*, hug and caress them, and in the interim let the *commands* stand by neglected. A *divinity* indeed fitly apportion'd to the devotion of *these times*, which loves to make an *offering to God of that which costs them nothing*, and yields a preference to that way of *worship* which assures *Salvation best cheap*, and at the *easiest terms*; but would men consider, they would find, that the *commands* are the supreme and most eminent part of the *Evangelical Covenant*, the *promises* come but as *hand-maids* and attendants: an honourable retinue to invite the more respectful entertainment, and it should be remembered that of this sort are the *threatnings* too; and therefore they have surely an equal right to our regard especially when many of them have the accession  
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of Gods Oath, to bind and strengthen their performance. And what a scandalous and absurd partiality is this, that when the precepts come with this solemnity the more to command our reverence, we single out this one part of the Train and pay our homage unto it; lay hold on the Promises, not those that speak damnation to impenitence, but the other half of them which give assurances of favour. And like the Benjamins to the daughters of Shiloh, run away with them, possess our selves of these by rape, in spite of all the incapacities we lye under; though God has sworn, that no disobedient provoker, shall enter into his rest.

THAT this is really the case of many is more than probable, for by what other artifice is it possible for them to reconcile their large hopes, with their no purifying, their confident expectations of heaven, with their greedy rapacious pursuits of Earth: their secure dependance on the Bloud of their Saviour with their remorseless effusions of that of their Brethren? did they consider the inseparable connexion between the Precepts and the Promises, 'twere hard for them to be so wicked, but impossible to be so sanguine. Did the unclean person believe that none but the pure in heart shall see God, if he could be so much Swine, as still to chuse the mire: yet sure he could not expect to be Rapt from thence into heaven. Did the Drunkard consider the sentence of the Apostle excluding all such from the Kingdom of God, 1 Cor. 6. 10. if he can be content so sadly  
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to oberbuy his sin; as to pay that Kingdom for his shot: yet certainly even he cannot be sot enough to expect the possession of what he has so sold, or hope that from one of his drunken *trances*, he shall *awake to glory*: did the *Covetous* extortioner observe that he is involv'd in the same sentence, remember that such *Violents shall take not heaven*, but *hell, by force*; if the terrors of the Lord could not have force enough to melt his bowels, to unclutch his griping hand, or disseize him of his prey: yet sure it must discourage him from grasping of heaven too, from hoping to defraud God as he has done *men*, and striking himself into an estate in the land of the living; and in like manner all other hoping sinners if they would ruine, yet must cease from flattering themselves, must chuse *damnation* bare-faced, and not fancy that their posting on in the broad way shall ever bring them to *life*. And sure this discovery of their estate, were a very good step to the curing it: for though 'tis possible some few may be of so *sturdy* an impiety as to chuse their *sin* with all its consequents, yet sure all sinners are not of that strong complexion, and therefore *Satan* is put to his wiles and artifices, is fain to *hoodwink* those that are apt to *start*: and disguises the danger when he sees the true appearance of it will terrifie and avert. This was his *old* policy with our *first* parents; he dazles their eyes with the *glorious* but *abusive* proposal of becoming like *Gods*, that they might not discern how near they were approaching to become like *Devils*: and

this under the pretence of confidence and friendship, discovering as it were a secret to them, that God envied them that promotion, which his greater kindness was solicitous to procure for them. And as if the ruine of mankind, in *Massa* had been too slight a *Trophy* for that one Stratagem, he repeats it again to the individuals, perswades men that the path of obedience which God has chalkt out is strait, and narrow, rugged and incumbred; that there is a shorter cut, an easier passage to life: that they may be led into *Canaan* a nearer way, step into it immediately from the flesh pots of *Egypt*, and scape the tedious weary March in the Wilderness: never so much as call at Mount *Sinai*, or be affrighted with the *Thunders* of the *Law*. In a word, they need not *work out their Salvation*, but be they never so slothful *they may inherit the promises*, Heb. 6. 12. this is his one grand *Conclusion*, though he has several *mediums* to infer it by: wherewith as with so many *tools* and *Engines* he furnishes men for the *filig* or breaking of that sacred link between duty and reward; and of these he has great variety fitted to the hands, and skill of those that manage them. I shall not undertake to ransack his *work-house*, or give an inventory of his *utenfils*, but shall rather in general beseech all those, who have made this unhappy separation to remember from whose *Forge* they took their *Instruments*: and then consider whether his officiousness in supplying them, can argue any thing but that 'tis his work they are about. Can any think that  
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he whose eternal pastime it will be to torment men, can really be solicitous of their ease that he would chuse out for them the *pleasanteſt paths*, were it not that he knows they lead to the *chambers of death*? when *Chriſt* whose ſole buſineſs it was to ſave mens ſouls, has preſcrib'd us a *course* which ſhall aſſuredly conduct us unto *happineſs*; what can it be but phrenſie to reſort to *Abaddon*, the deſtroyer for an eaſier *method*, or expect more *gentleneſs* and compaſſion from the *roaring Lion* than from the *Lamb of God*.

N A Y indeed this is not only to attribute to him more tenderneſs, but fidelity too: to believe him in oppoſition to all the expreſs affirmations of God; and when he who is truth its ſelf has told us, that *except we repent we ſhall all periſh*, Luk. 13. 5. and that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, Heb. 12. 14. to diſbelieve this only upon his bare credit, who was a lyar from the beginning: This indeed is a prodigious compoſition of blaſphemy and folly: a ſtrange contumely to *God*, but fatal treachery to our *ſelves*: For alas Satan entertains us all this while but with a trick of *Leger de main*, and as *Juglers* make us believe we have cut the *ſtring*, which yet preſently after they ſhew us *whole*: ſo he perſwades us he has thus ſever'd the *Condition* from the *Promiſes*, when to our grief it will finally appear their union was *inviolable*. 'Tis not all our vain confidence that can reverse the immutable divine Law, we may, 'tis true, delude our ſelves, keep up our ſpirits high; in a ſecure jollity eat



and drink, and rise up to play, and so not only loyter, but revel out our *day*, till the *night* overtake us *wherein no man can work*, but we shall never be able to propagate the deceit, where only it could avail us, to perswade God to pay the *hire* to those that have been no labourers, or give the *prize* to any who have not run to obtain it. Let every man therefore in a just tenderness to his own Soul, strictly examine his hopes, try not how *high* they towre, but how *deep* they are founded; whether on the *sand* or on the *rock*; the flattering delusions of Satan, and the dreams of his own Phancy, or on the Promises of God: for though all pretend to build on the latter, yet God knows, a multitude of foolish *Architects* there are, which mistake their ground, take that for assurance that is not: and this truly is a thing deserves to be soberly consider'd, they that most greedily catch at the Promises, do often embrace a *cloud* instead of the *Deity* which they so eagerly grasp, and thereby think to enjoy. But *faithful* obedience, and not *insolent* hopes, commend us unto God. The Gospel indeed describes to us great and inestimable *felicities*, but he that can think this gives him *Title* to them, may as well pretend to the whole *World*, because he has the *Map* of it in his house: for though it mentions them to all, yet it promises them to none but the obedient. And those *Israelites* which fled from the sight of *Goliath*, 1 Sam. 17. 25. might as reasonably challenge the reward propos'd to the victor, as men can pretend to

to enter into life without keeping the Commandments : this then is the one *Criterion*, by which a man may judge of his hopes ; if they be but proportionable to his obedience, they are then regular, and such as will not make him ashamed, but prove incentives and engagements to every good work. Let him obey as much as he can, and then he need not deny himself the comfort of hoping as much as he can too. But if his *hopes* exceed this measure, and square themselves only by his *wishes* ; if he look for Heaven, not because he is *qualified* for it, but because he wants or covets it ; this is rather to dream than hope, and such *whimsies* will as soon invest the begger in *wealth*, the defam'd in *honour*, the sick in *health*, or any man in any thing he has but a mind to, as compass *Heaven* for the bold *Fiduciary*.

IT is indeed like those *Lunacies* wherein mens fancies adopt them Heirs to those Kingdoms, they know nothing more of, than the names : and sure the Analogy holds as well in the *cure* as the *disease* ; let these *Patients* awhile be kept dark, taken from the dazzling contemplations of their imaginary priviledges, to the sad reflection on their sins : and as God expostulates with *Israel*, Ezek. 33. 26. *Ye stand upon the sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every man his neighbours wife, and shall ye possess the land ?* So let them recite to themselves the Catalogues of their impieties, and then ask their own hearts, whether these be the qualifications of those that shall rest in Gods holy hill ? Whether these marks of the

*Beast* can ever rank them among the followers of the *Lamb*? And let these Considerations be prest home, reiterated so often, till by repeated strokes they have made good the other part of the method, made their Souls bleed, and by that Spiritual *Phlebotomy*, temper'd their swelling veins, allayed the over-sanguinefs of their constitution: and then there remains but one thing more to complete the course, and that is bringing them into the *Work-house*, setting them really to *work* *out* their *salvation* with *fear* and *trembling*, which they had so near played away by confidence and presumption: And when they have done thus, they have verified their hopes, and then may safely reassume them: They are return'd again with advantage to their first point, and are that in *soberness* and *reality*, which they then were only in *fiction* and *imagination*.

AND now would God men would once be content to be thus disabus'd, that they would not be so in love with deceit, as in the Prophets phrase, *Jer. 8. 5. to hold it fast*: that they would not chuse *Ghymara's* and *phantastick* Images before *real* and *substantial* Felicities: and prefer that hope which will be sure to *ship-wrack* them, before that which will be an *Anchor of the Soul*, *sure and steadfast*, *Heb. 6. 19.* and if this so reasonable a proposal may be embrac't; if the *World* should, as the *Spaniard* said, but *rise wise one morning*, what a deal of dead merchandize would Satan have upon his hands: Many of those they call the comfortable Doctrines would want vent, which are

now

now the staple commodity of his Kingdom. What those are, 'tis no part of my design to examine, it will be every mans particular concern to do it for himself; which he may do by this one test; whether they more animate men to *hope* well, than to *live* well? Whether they bring *Alexanders* sword to cut asunder the *Gordian* knot, to sever between the promise and the condition? Or the sword of the *Spirit* to subdue all to the obedience of Christ? If the former, we may expect the fruits of such will be all that licentiousness which *St. Paul* describes, as *the works of the flesh*, *Gal. 5. 19.* it being not to be imagin'd, that the *precepts* of the Gospel, which they divide from the *promises* only, that they might fall off, shall then be *voluntarily* taken up in meer good nature and heroick Generosity; that those who are so industrious to avoid the necessity of *Christian practice*, will make it their *free-will-offering*. If there should happen to be some few of so ingenuous a gratitude; yet 'tis certain, that is not our common mould; few men will be better than they think their interest bids them be, and therefore such principles are dangerous Seminaries of *Libertinism*: and 'tis mens very important concernment not to admit them. Let not then their cheerful *aspect* recommend them to our *embraces*; men may be kill'd with too much *Cordial*; that which seems to refresh the *Spirits* may enflame the *Blood*, and though *cold poisons* have gotten the fame of being the most *malignant*, yet there are *hot* that are as infallibly *mortiferous*. Let it be

our care in opposition to both, to keep our selves in that moderate, equal temper, which belongs to *healthy Souls*: and since that is the vitallest heat which is gotten by exercise, set to our busi-ness, employ our selves diligently in all those du-ties the Gospel exacts, and then we shall not want such an hope as may warm our hearts, keep us in a cheerful expectation, till we come to the glorious fruition of that *Eternal Salvation which God has promised to all them, and only them that obey him*. And till we do thus, till we consider as well what we are to *do*, as what we are to *receive*: there will be no hope of restoring Christianity to its native vigour; we shall make it evaporate all its strength in *unsignificant hopes*, convert it into Air, to bear up our Bubbles, instead of that *firm ground*, whereon we should build *virtue* here, and *glory* hereafter.

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## CHAP. V.

*A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Carnal Con-sideration.*

**A**FTER the disadvantages of *partial* Consideration, may fairly be subjoyn'd the ills of that advertency, which is im-pregnated by *sensuality* and sloth, and makes pre-tence unto right *reason*, but tends indeed as much as any thing to the frustrating the design, and en-feebling

feebling the force of our Religion : such close *reserves* of deceit and malice have men to their own Souls, that when they quit *one* strong hold of Satans, 'tis only to retreat to *another*. When they are not so *brisk* and Aerial, as lightly to skip over those precepts, that lye in their way : they are so *gross* and unwary as to fall at them ; if they may not pass for Straws and Chaffe, such as every blast of vain confidence may blow away, they shall then be improved into Heaps and Mountains, become stones of stumbling and rocks of offence ; and when they are call'd upon to Consider them, they do it in so perverse a manner, as if they meant to revenge themselves on that unwelcome importunity : their *consideration* is worse than *neglect*. They look into them insiduously, not as *Disciples*, but as *Spies*, not to weigh the obligingness, but to quarrel the unreasonableness or difficulty of the injunctions, not to direct their *practice*, but excuse their *prevarications*.

FROM this unsincere kind of inspection it is, that the *Precepts* have got so formidable appearance with many, that they have fallen under such heavy prejudices, as to resolve them intolerable yokes, insuperable tasks : that this *Canaan* is a land that eats up its inhabitants, wherein there is so little of *enjoyment* that it scarce affords a *being*. Men count a *life* under such restraints, so joyless and uneasy, that it differs from *death* only, by being more *passive*. They think *Zeal* like a *Heetick Fever*, in a slow but certainly fatal *Fire* exhausts and consumes the *Spirits*. Mortification



fication and *self-denial* macerate and decay the *body*; and *liberality* dissipates and wastes the *estate*: and with these Apparitions which themselves have conjur'd up; men run frighted from duty, resolve the burden is unsupportable, or at least grievous to be born, and therefore, as our Saviour says of the *Pharisees*, *will not touch it*, no not so much as *with one of their fingers*, *Mat. 23.* 4. never make any attempt to try what indeed they are; but take their measures from their own, or perhaps other mens prejudicate opinions, and thence take out an *Authentick Record* and *Patent* for sloth, fancy the journey too long for them, and therefore sit still; first call Christs commandments *grievous*, and then improve that slander into a *manumission*; absolve themselves from obeying them. And unless they may have the Gate to life cut wider, made capacious enough to receive them with all their lusts about them, will never essay to enter it.

BUT if the *Prince of darkness* have enacted it a *Law*, that difficulty shall pass for excuse, yet if *real* uneasiness may be admitted to be as deterring as *imaginary* ones, his own decree will retort the most ruinously on himself, and men may plead it as their discharge, from all those base drudgeries, those tyrannous impositions where-with he loads them. The *Drunkard* may experimentally tell him, the *pain* of an aking head, of an overcharged stomach, the *ruine* of a wasted Estate, and claim a dispensation from pursuing that uneasy and costly sin. The *Wanton* may bring



bring his macerated body like the *Levites Concubine Jud*, and urge it as an evidence how cruel a Master he serves; and from thence emancipate and free himself: and indeed every sin carries in it so much of visible toil, or secret smart, as would by force of this rule supplant and undermine its self; and sure *Satan* would never have arm'd men with so dangerous a *weapon*, had he not discern'd them so in love with *slavery*, as secures him it should never be us'd against him; for if it should, nothing could give him a more mortal wound, more irrecoverably shake his Kingdom. Nor would only that *infernal Region* feel the force of that *destructive* principle; it would make as strange confusions in *secular Regiments*.

FOR if such *pleas* as these may be admitted, they will easily cancel all *Humane*, as well as *Divine Laws*, and every *malefactor* will transfer his *guilt* on the severity of the *Legislator*: the *Thief* may say it is too great a difficulty for him to resist the temptation of an apt *opportunity*; a rich prize that his fingers are too slippery even for himself, and he cannot restrain them, and then quarrel the strictness of the *Law*, which has rais'd so high a fence about mens properties, that he who climbs it must endanger his *neck*. The *Rebel* may complain that the bands of *Allegiance* are too strait, the yoke sits too close, galls and frets his tender flesh, exclaim loudly at the *Tyranny* of those that laid it on, and in that out-cry drown the noise of his own *Treason*. And so every other transgressor may accuse the rule, as necessary

cessary to his swervings, till at last the *Laws* be made the only *Criminals*.

I leave every man to judge both of the equity and consequences of such discouragements in *Civil* matters, and shall only desire he will apply them to *Spiritual* also, where certainly they are neither more just, nor less ruinous; and whilest such absurd *pretences* as these pass currant, no wonder if *Christianity* languish and grow impotent, want strength to impress its self on the lives of its *professors*. The most infallible receipt can work no cure on him, who upon the suspicion of its bitterness, refuses to taste it. The most excellent *Laws* must look their regulating power, where the *execution* of them is obstructed; and we may as reasonably look for the efficacy of *Christianity* among those who never heard the *name*, as among those, who owning the *name*, do yet disclaim its *precepts*; and so all those interpretatively do, who by accusing them of too great rigour, avert both themselves and others from their Obedience.

THAT the Charge is scandalously unjust will appear to any, who shall allow themselves the just means of information; but alas the way of *Proceß* men take in this affair is so inequitable, as certainly presages the partiality of the *sentence*, what Person ever was there so innocent, so excellent, who if arraign'd at the *Tribunal* of his mortal enemy could be acquitted, *Christ* himself shall be pronounc'd a *Blasphemer*, when a *Gaiphaz* is to examine him: and no wonder if his *precepts* find  
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proportionable dealing, if they be decried as *impossible, tyrannical, perhaps ridiculous* too, where the scanning of them is referr'd to those, whose interest it is to defame them. Men enthrone their *lusts*, set them up in the *judgement seat*, and none can expect they shall pass such a *sentence*, as shall include their own *condemnation*: if they own the *Commandment* to be *holy, just and good*, they must tacitely accuse *themselves* to be *impure, unjust and wicked*, and as such to be consign'd to wrath and judgment.

HERE then we have the true account how Christs *commands*, which are in themselves so far from grievous, have gotten so unkind a *reputation* among us; this is so direct a course for it, that we may cease our *wonder*, though not our *grief* to see it, for we behold them stand to the award of those with whom they have a profest enmity: the *Goal* gives sentence on the *Bench*; the *Bar* arraigns the *Judgment Seat*. Certainly when that Law which is *Spiritual* is submitted to the arbitrimēt of gross *carnality*, the Law of liberty is taxed and rated by those worst *bondmen who are sold under sin*; 'tis impossible to find any fairer treatment. That which comes on purpose to dethrone sin, dispossess it of the Empire it has usurpt, will certainly be entertain'd with the same *exclamation* the Devils us'd to Christ, *Why art thou come to torment us?* But as if this *general Antipathy* were not enough to ascertain the rejection of Christs command; as if the *National feud*, as I may call it, between Heaven and Hell were not thought  
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irreconcilable enough, men offer yet harder measure, call in the aid of *personal* quarrels, and when the precepts come to be consider'd, refer each of them single to that *particular* Vice to which it has the directest *contrariety*.

THUS when Christs command of *meekness* and *forgiveness*, of *loving enemies*, and *turning the cheek*, *bearing the Cross*, or *self-denial* calls for audience; they consult (as *Rehoboam* did with his young hot-spurs) with their anger and malice, their rankor and revenge, and they soon give their *Verdict*; that to be meek is to be *servile*, a temper fit only for the abject. That to forgive enemies is a principle of *cowardize* that would *Emafcuate* the world; to love them a piece of *Spaniel-like fawning*; but to turn the Cheek; not only to hazard, but invite new injuries by owning them as benefits, paying blessing for curses, kindness and good-turns for hatred, is such a *ridiculous patience*, as must expose to the insolence of many, and the scorn and derision of all men. And then the *resolution* is ready they will be no such *fools* for Christs sake. So when the precept of humility and lowliness comes to be consider'd, their *Pride* is deputed to hear its plea, and then though it bring the authority of Christs *example* as well as his *command*, it will be judg'd invalid: *Christ* indeed *took upon him the form of a Servant*, and to that humility was a proportionable *Adjunct*; but what is that to them whose aspiring humour abhors subjection, 'tis not calculated for their *Meridian*, they are of another man-

ner of Spirit, and would not have it embased by the admission of so mean a quantity: and though Christ have put *poverty of Spirit* among his Beatitudes, they resolve he shall not ensnare them with that *artifice*, they will not take his *measures* of felicity; or resign that pleasure they have in valuing themselves, for any thing he proposes in exchange. In like manner the precepts of temperance, sobriety and chastity, are not permitted to the judgment of sober *reason*, nay, nor of meer natural *desire*; but to *appetites* vitiated and inflam'd, by radicated *habits*; and then the *Glutton* thinks to eat moderately, is to be starv'd; and will as soon *put a knife*, Prov. 23. *to his throat*, in the vulgar sense of cutting it, as in *Solomons* notion of restraining his excess. Thus the *Drun-kard* with his false thirsts looks on sobriety as a kind of Hell, where he shall want *a drop to cool his tongue*, and thinks the abandoning his debauched jollities is an implicate adieu to all the comforts of life. The *Unclean* person when his blood is high scoffs at Chastity as a religious kind of impotence, and only so far considers the *precept* of *pulling out the Eye*, as to infer that it were as easie literally to part with it, as to restrain its lustful range: not look at all, as not look to lust. And proportionably it fares with Charity and bounty, which though our *Saviour* recommend, *Mammon* arraigns of robbery, and stigmatizes as a *Thief* that picks the Purse, and ruffles Coffers. But amidst all these *the taking up the Cross*, *suffering for righteousness sake*, and *the doctrine of self-denial*,

nial, fall under the heaviest prejudice. These are oppos'd not by some one single vice, but the confederate arms of all; even those whose interests are flatly opposite do here unite: *Herod* and *Pilate*, *Saduces* and *Pharisees* accord against *Christ*, and all are freely suffer'd, nay invited to exhibit their *complaints* against these *Mandates*. *Covetousness* cries out that this is the most ruinous prodigality, casts away an estate in a lump, and lays all open to forfeiture and confiscation: and *Prodigality* takes it as ill to be forestall'd, and have nothing left for it to dissipate. *Prophaness* avows a contempt of it as a folly, and most open madness to part with *real* pleasure for an *empty* name, or profit for that *Bankrupt thing* call'd Conscience: and *Hypocrisie* has a more secret hatred of it, as its detector; that which will bring it to a Test which it cannot pass. *Malice* puts in a *Caveat*, that this is to gratifie enemies, and lose the satisfactions of revenge: and *Self-Love* puts in another, that it is to destroy ones self. In short, every *limb* of the body of sin discharges a *blow* at this innocent and Divine Sanction; as if they meant it should exemplifie its own doctrine by assuming that passive temper it recommends.

BUT alas, who can expect any more *upright* verdicts from such *part*, such *corrupt* Juries, and why may not *Christ* be permitted to claim the common *benefit* of our *Laws*, to make his challenge and exceptions against this so incompetent *impanel*. 'Tis the counsel of the Wise man, not  
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to advise in common affairs with those whose tempers may be suppos'd to bias them, *consult not*, saies he, *with a coward in matters of war, nor with a sluggard of much business*, Eccl. 37. 11. and sure if they be ill *Counsellors*, they must be worse *Judges*: but why then do we set pride to judge of humility, lust of purity, covetousness of liberality: and make our *vices* the *arbitrators* of those *Laws* which should restrain them? This is such a gross *injustice* as common *humanity* abhors; we deal by other measures with men, the most notorious and flagitious criminals: and reserve this way of process for those things only wherein our God may be concern'd. 'Tis a severe exprobration of a prophane people, *Malach. 1. 8.* Where God accuses them for treating *him* with less reverence than they would do a *mortal Prince*. *Offer it now to thy Prince*: but alas we shall force him to descend far lower in his expostulation, so far we are from paying him the *duty* and regard belonging to a *Prince*, that we yield him not the rights of *common* men: force him to stand to those measures which we think too unequitable to press upon a murderer, a thief, or rebel at the Bar.

BUT this waving of common rules is a plain confession that we need more indulgence, than those will allow: when mens *lusts* thus usurp the *Tribunal* and judge in their own cause, 'tis a palpable discovery they dare not remit themselves to any more equal determination. And indeed in this point of their interest, they pass a



right judgment: for 'tis certain were the *case* re-ferr'd to any competent Judge, indeed to *any* but *themselves* they would inevitably be cast; and sure 'tis high time that some should assist *oppress'd* *vertue* in its appeal; find it out some *Court of equity* where its plea may be heard: and we need not travel *far* for that purpose, every man may do it in his own *breast*, where in his little *Common-wealth* he shall find a *Court of Gods* erecting: let him but draw the Cause *thither*, discuss the matter in his own conscience; and he will soon find the former unrighteous sentences re-vers'd: let him but seriously reflect on his *violations* of those sacred Precepts of Christ; and observe what a *sting* and secret remorse every such *breach* leaves within him: and that will be a competent attestation of the *equity* and obligingness of those Mandates: for from whence else can the regret arise? those things that are either impossible in their nature, or unconcerning to us cannot beget it. No man accuses himself for not flying in the *air*, or walking upon the *water*: nor owns himself *guilty* in the non-observance of any *Laws*, but such as have *power* to oblige him: and therefore these close pangs and checks of *Conscience* are an irrefragable evidence, that men do *inwardly* assent to the justice and authority of those divine *rules*; which their *actions*, yea often their *words* too, do most oppugn.

BUT over and above the throws and after-pains of conscience, when sin is brought forth, the self-accusation of the *Criminal*, when none be-side

side controuls, nay many flatter and commend: I say beyond this secondary and reflex *Apology*, for Christs Law, owed to the foregoing prevarication of it; there is an early and immediate *verdict* pass in its behalf, in the esteem and liking which those documents command, where ere they pass: creating an assent and veneration not only when obey'd, but from profess despisers; who cannot chuse to think well of that vertue they desert, and the necessity of their affairs compel them to speak ill of. An event *visible* in the condemnation of our Saviour, where the *Judge* who gave Sentence against him, at the same moment *wash'd his hands*, and openly profess *he found no fault in him*.

AND indeed this very reflexion on the *Author* of these precepts, if well consider'd would supersede all other arguments. The *Mandates* of the Gospel on this one score, that they are Christs, are certainly both *pure* in themselves, and *possible* to us: and so most worthy not only of all *Obedience*, but all *Love* too. He who is our *Lord* upon both the titles of *Creation* and *Redemption*, may certainly with all justice impose what laws he pleases on us. Yet he, who laid down his life for the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first Testament, cannot be imagin'd so inconsiderate of our frailty which himself had smarted for, as to introduce another of equal rigor, or be so prodigal of his blood, as to pour it out for those who by a new set of impossible commands should infalli-

bly reforfeit themselves again: and if this cannot be suppos'd, the contrary may be concluded, that he hath so far condescended to our imbecillity, as not to *prescribe* us any thing which he either finds or makes us not able to *perform*. 'Tis true indeed, his *Laws* are above the reach of our corrupt and debased *nature*; and they were unfit to be his, were they not so: but when he by his grace offers to elevate and refine this nature, bring it up to the pitch and purity of those *Laws*, this is a far greater mercy than if he had descended to our corruption; so he might have contaminated himself, given laws unworthy of him: but alas what advantage would it be to us, to have the *Blasphemy* mention'd, *Psal. 50.* so verified to have our *God* in this sense, *such a one as our selves?* but by this other *Method* he purifies, and exalts us: puts us in a capacity of being *like unto him*, in which is summ'd up at once, all both *vertue* and *felicity*.

AND on this glorious *end* every particular *command* of his, has a direct aspect, every one of them tending to *re-impres*s on us some part of that divine *image* which was raz'd out by the *first sin*: and this one would think enough to recommend them to our highest value. Certainly, if *Conscience* may be *Judge*, it will be so: there being in this case no middle between *devout* reverence, and *horrid* blasphemy; for he that despises such an *assimilation*, must necessarily also despise *him* who is so *resembled*: he who thinks meekness, purity, humility, &c. *unamiable qualities*

lities, can have little esteem for him, in whom they are so *transcendently eminent*, but will take the Prophet at his word, and say, *there is no form nor comeliness in him*, *Es. 53*. But this sure can never be the *Verdict* of Conscience; he that can thus pronounce, must be suppos'd to have suppress'd and silenc'd that. It being one of the most indelible notions there, that *all that is in God, is sublimely excellent*. But because 'tis indeed too possible that conscience may be put under such an undue restraint, suffer the violence of a *Prisoner*, when it should sustain the place of a *Judge*: because many men dare not permit their consciences to speak, lest they should say more than they are willing to hear. And lastly, since these persons make their appeal to reason, pretend the aids, and boast in the advantages of that, it may not be amiss to bring the *Cause* unto that *Bar*: whose *Empire* and *Authority* none must disclaim that own the *Style*, and least of all those *Scepticks* in Religion with whom we have to do: who will allow of no conviction but from it.

A N D God, who as the Apostle saies, *leaves not himself without witness*, has so temper'd and dispos'd his *Precepts* as to qualifie them to pass even this Test also, they being not the *contradictions* but *improvements* of natural Reason: and so most apt to recommend themselves to all that is *Man*, not *Brute* about us. Indeed they have the very same aim and design with that. It has ever been the grand business of *sober reason* first to discover, and then to attain that *one supreme*

good, which would give rest and felicity to the soul: in this inquisition have the *Philosophers* and greatest Masters of Reason, laid out their most serious studies and deepest contemplations; and in their indefatigable pursuits seem jointly to sigh out *David's* question, *Who will shew us any good?* and now the *Gospel* comes a solution of this so important a Query, brings these glad tidings of joy to all people, and that not only in its *credenda*, by informing us what that Good is: but in its *agenda* too, by tracing us out the Way to it: beating us a path which will certainly lead us to that *summum bonum* which our very Nature implicitly gasps after; and sure Reason can never jar with this, which comes thus as a happy Auxiliary to succour its impotence: as an infallible Guide to conduct its steps: and as a glorious Light to give it a clear view, of what it before blindly groped after. 'Tis a certain Indication of Madness, to tear and mischief those things that would be useful to us, to curse and revile a friend, or fly in the face of those whose charity brings them to our aid; and therefore 'tis most evident that Reason must first cease to be reason, and commence Phrenzy, before 'tis possible it can set its self in defiance of those Laws of Christ, which are thus accommodated to its greatest Interests.

AND as the accord is thus observable in the ultimate, so is it in the intermediate design also. Reason had by its twilight discern'd that, that Sovereign Bliss it aim'd at, would never be hit by  
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an unsteady hand; by him who was perpetually tossed and agitated by his turbulent inordinate appetites. Therefore young men, yet in the heat and ferment of their blood were solemnly proscrib'd and banisht from the Schools and Lectures of *Philosophy*; therefore lustrations and *Catharticks* of the mind were sought for, and all endeavour us'd to calm and regulate the *fury*, if not extirpate (which some contended for) the very *being* of the Passions: that so a preparation might be made *first* for the knowledge and *then* the attainment of felicity: Now the *Gospel Precepts* have visibly the same *end* and purpose: every one of them expressly singling out some irregular affection to combat and subdue: so that *right Reason* and *They* are evidently of a *Sett* and Party, insomuch that several of the ancientest Fathers of the Church attributed the excellent documents of *Heathen Philosophers* to the *Divine λόγος*, the reason and essential *Word of God* which after was *incarnate* upon earth; and brought auxiliary strengths of *Grace*, to aid the weaknesses of *Nature*. The blessed *Jesus* whose bare word *Checkt the Sea* in its highest fury, and by that Miracle attested his Divinity; as much exerts himself in silencing the louder Tempests, and calming the intestine storms within our breasts. And certainly *Reason* will not quarrel to have been thus reliev'd, it being the *property* only of proud *Folly* to chuse rather to *lose* a victory than *owe* it to the aid of an Allie.

FROM this general view, it were easie to

descend to observe the exact concurrence of particulars. God loves a *reasonable service*, and has so temper'd his commands, that every Act of obedience we perform may be so qualified: and gain unto its votaries the *Elogium* promis'd in the Law of Moses, Deut. 4. 9. *Surely this people is a wise and understanding People.* And first that the command of *Meekness* is a most *rational* Precept can never be doubted by any who remember but the common definition of *Anger*, that it is *Furor brevis*, and sure 'tis very reasonable not to be mad, and he that has observ'd the unmanly transportations of that wilde passion, how that the first violence it offers is to the man within him, will certainly think it the interest, not only of his *Religion*, but common prudence, and right *Reason* to suppress it. And the like is to be said of the more solemn *Phrensie* of deep malice and deliberate *Revenge*, where the fury wants the allay of being transient and short liv'd, is embodied into *Complexion* and temper, and grows inveterate into *Nature*. *Anger* indeed is a *fire*, and he that touches it though but lightly, will find it *scorch* him: but the *Malicious* lays himself as it were to *roast* at it; prolongs and spins out his own *Torment* as if he meant to anticipate his *Punishment* in his very crime, and commence his *Hell* here, in *unquenchable fire*. Truly no *sin* does more represent that state of horror to which it tends; it gives a man not only a certain *Title*, but an ample *Earnest*, pays him part in hand of those dismal wages. This was so well understood



stood even by the *Heathens* that we see the *Poets* knew not how more *Emphatically* to describe the future *torment* of an envious and malicious person, than by the representation of his *sin*. *Prometheus Vultur* begins her quarry in this life; every malignant *Thought*, every spiteful *Wish* preys upon his *Heart* that harbours it: every revengeful project puts him in the pangs of labour till it be brought forth; and when it is, it commonly rebounds so mischievously upon the Parent, that the birth seems like that of *Agrippina* when she bare *Nero* that murder'd her. And surely not only *reason*, but common *sense*, will say this is a state to be detested, and consequently must give its suffrage to those *Laws* of Meekness and Charity which are the only expedients to prevent it. *Peace* is deservedly reckon'd among the *highest blessings* of communities, and sure it has a proportionable value, in every single member of those greater bodies, it being that which is indispensably requisite to the enjoying of any other good. A *War* we know interrupts at once all the *profits* and *pleasures* of a Nation: and this hostile *Temper* in a mans mind does the very same, and like *Choler* in the stomach, takes off all *gust* of the most delightful things, and so becomes a *Hell* in the *pœna damni*, as well as that of *Sense*: and then how absurd an impatience is it, for men to think every the slightest injury from another insupportable, and yet heap such heavy pressures upon themselves, like froward *Children* roar out for the least touch from another hand, yet  
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knock and batter *themselves* without complaint : as if their only contention were, that they may be the sole *Authors* of their own *Calamity*. And that which adds yet more, if it be possible, to add to so vast a folly, is, that *Revenge* never repairs any *Injury* : if I have been reproacht or defam'd, 'tis not the wounding of my enemies body that will heal my fame, I may by that means help to spread the Libel by inviting many to enquire the cause of our quarrel : but that is no *Medium* to prove him a slanderer, the world being too well acquainted with the nature of revenge to imagine it an argument of his innocency that acts it : so far it is from being such, that it gives a most violent presumption of guilt, according to that notable *Observation* of the *Historian*, *Convitia spreta exolescunt, si irascere agnita videntur*. In like manner suppose me hurt in my body, *Retaliation* brings no *balm* to my sores : my pains abate not by his having the like or greater ; nor would my Wounds fester the less though his should *Gangrene*. So if I am endammag'd in my goods, I may contrive to repay him that ill turn, and yet not recover my own loss ; and generally the spiteful spoils that are made, are of that nature. 'Tis true, the Law may in some cases repair the injur'd person : but then that is owing to the Justice of the Law, not to the malice of the *Plaintiffe* : for he that sues upon the naked intuition of recovering his *Right*, without any aspect of *Revenge* on the invader, has as fully the benefit of the Law (and indeed none can innocently have it

it otherwise) and then to what serves the vindictive humor, what increment or advantage can the superaddition of his revenge bring him in? 'Tis sure in all these instances it often does the quite contrary: plunges him in farther troubles and dangers, and when all this is consider'd, we may certainly pronounce *Christs* precept of Meekness, partakes as well of the *Serpent* as the *Dove*, is as well *prudent* as *innocent*: nor is this *Conclusion* at all shaken, by that *Objection* which men make from the danger of inviting more injuries and affronts by this tameness: for first suppose there were truth in it; that hazard could not balance the many certain mischiefs which have been evinc'd inseparably to follow the contrary temper: and it were certainly less penal to endure multitudes of light and transient *Abuses*, than those far more uneasy waies of *Redress*, which mens revenges suggest to them: and then 'twill be perfectly reasonable, *of these two evils to chuse the less*. As for the greater and more important violations, there are legal waies which may prove redress in some cases, or prevention in others: He that is slandered or impoverished, may take a course to clear his *Innocence*, or recover his *Goods*: he that is hurt or maim'd, though he is incapable of reparations, yet the Law provides for his future security, by awarding such *Penalties*, as may discourage the *Offender* from repeating the *violence*: and to these aids, a man may resort with these *Proviso's*, *first*, that he abstract from all design of *Revenge*; and *secondly*, that the matter be  
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of *Weight*; and certainly he that by these *legal means* cannot be secur'd, can be much less so by any *private attempt* of his own: For he that despiseth the coercive *power* of *Laws*, will much more condemn the *enmity* of a single person. The only difficulty in this case is, when a state is in such a confusion that there is no lawful *Judicature* to appeal to, but that implies so many sadder miseries, than the want of such a redress amounts to, that every man may patiently enough cast this into the heap of greater evils; and not consider that one pressure, when so much weightier calamity exacts his grief: But sure the *Suspension of Law* in this particular does no more *qualifie* a private person to be his own *Revenger*, than it invests him in any other part of *Authority*, and he may with as good right place himself on the Bench, and become a *Judge* in other mens causes, as thus become both *Judge* and *Executioner* in his own.

BUT in the *last* place, the ground of this objection seems weak and sandy; for that meekness is not the way to expose a man, generally speaking, to more suffering: 'tis possible indeed through the barbarity of some few insulting *cowards*, who love to vapour *good cheap*, that they may trample on those who give least resistance; but this is not the common bent of *humane Nature*, (which ought to be the measure in this case) we find men usually exasperated by *Opposition*, who are calm'd and appeas'd by *Gentleness*. *Anger* is not of the nature of that monstrous *Fire*  
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the *Historian* tells us of, which *nothing but blows could extinguish*. It is the *Observation* of the wisest of Men, that a *soft answer turneth away wrath*, and mens *Passions* are like *Bullets* which batter the walls which stand inflexible, but fall harmlessly into *Wool* or *Feathers*; and I doubt not common experience will attest it, that none do generally fall under fewer of these storms than they, who are thus prepar'd to bear them. Let a meek and an angry person cast up their *Accounts* together, and compare the number of affronts and contumelies they have met with, and I believe the *Odds* will be as great, as between *Sauls* thousands and  *Davids* ten thousands. 'Tis certain that the return made to the first injury provokes a new one; men being so partial to themselves, that he who receives a harm by way of *Retaliation*, never reflects on his own first guilt, but looks on it as a naked *Injury*, and so pursues his *Revenge*, which has again the same effect on the other, and so this *wild-fire* runs round, till it have set all in a *flame*; made the saddest vastations, not only in mens *Minds*, but their outward *Concernments* too, in the many fatal outrages, which these eager contentions occasion, all which would be avoided by a meek disregard of the first provocation: So that although some injuries may fall upon the *Passive* man, yet infallibly there would be no broils and quarrels, which are alone the great accumulators and multipliers of injuries; which alone demonstrates how unjustly *Meekness* is charg'd with so much as an accidental producti-

production of them ; and vindicates that *precept* of *Christ* which has faln under so much, not only *Cavil* but *Scorn* ; it appearing that to abstain from revenge, and refer the hazards of that to Gods providence ( which is the importance of his command to *turn the Cheek* ) is the greatest even moral *Security* against *Violence*, and so approves our *Law-giver* ( in this so decried particular ) to be as well the *wonderful Counsellour*, as the *Prince of Peace*.

IN the next place, if we weigh the *precept* of humility and lowliness in the *balance* of sober discourse, we shall certainly find it hold a *just weight*. Indeed *Pride* is nothing but *Deceit*, a meer cheat and delusion, and so every man can discern it in another, we *there* are able to trace the windings of this *Serpent*, and say *this* man thinks himself more wise, *this* more learned, a *third* more holy than he is : yet alas in our own breasts we discern not the *Abuse*, suffer him to perswade *us* what he but promis'd to our *first Parents*, that we are *as Gods*, something so super-excellent, that all must reverence and adore : And herein we take him at his word, never suspect these glorious *Attributions* may be no more than *Complement* or Flattery ; or what is no less obvious, *Derision* and *Scorn*. To a considering man 'twould be a shrew'd *presumption* against whatever *Pride* suggests, that 'tis attended always by *self-love*, which is, as it were, the *common setter* to all those cheats which circumvent and fool us : But there want not also more convincing proofs of its deceit and un sincerity. When e're we overween and believe well of  
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our selves, it is in contemplation of some *imaginary* or else *real* good; somewhat a Man has not, or somewhat that he has: If we do it upon the former account, that is undeniably a gross *Delusion*; a kind of *deceptio visus*, a filling the Eye with phantastick *Aerial* Images, which have no *solid* Being: And God knows, such *Phasmes*, such Apparitions are most of those *excellencies* which men applaud in themselves; things conjur'd up by the *Magick* of a strong imagination, and are only seen within that *Circle* in which the *Enchanter* stands: And though *Satan* be the *grand Master* of this *black Art*, yet his *Pupils* are now grown so dextrous, that he seldom needs to be call'd in; our own partialities and fondnesses to our selves, are abundantly sufficient for the purpose. But if in the *second* place we suppose the things to be *really* existent in us, yet *Pride* runs us upon an *other error* no less dangerous than the *former*, for it betrays us to mistake the true *Owner* of them, emboldens us to set our own mark upon those *rich Wares*, in whose acquirement we have not been so much as *Factors*; God is the one great Author and proprietor of all that is or can be valuable in us; to his Providence or his Grace we owe all the accomplishment of our outward or inward man, and though he allows us the *use* and benefit of them, yet the *Glory* is a special *Royalty*, which (as the Gold or Silver Mines of a Nation) is reserved to his *Crown*, an incommunicable piece of his *Regality*. And how wofully does our *Pride* bes fool us, when it brings us in such false *Inventories*



ries of our goods, makes us dream our selves rich by anothers wealth; like *Children* that call every thing theirs which looks splendidly, or the mad *Athenian* celebrated by *Horace* for his happy phrensie, that resolv'd all the *Ships and Wares* his own that came into the *Cities harbour*: But how more sadly does it betray us, when it thus puts us upon the invasion of his propriety, who is not as the impotent *Monarchs* of the earth, unable to assert his own *Rights*, but can certainly *Vindicate* himself to our *Confusion*, against whom no rebellion can be any longer prosperous than he willingly permits it, and who has solemnly avowed *he will not give his glory to another*: And when our *Pride* makes us thus both ridiculous and miserable, when it seduces us not only into the folly of *Children* and extravagancies of *Lunaticks*, but at once into the guilt of bold, and punishment of impetuous *Rebels*: Certainly *Reason* can never become its *Advocate*, or put in any demur to that *Sentence* which excludes so treacherous a guest out of mens hearts; which is the sole aim of those *laws of humility* which *Christ* has given us.

NOR will the Precepts of *Temperance* and *Purity* find any worse doom at this Bar, the contrary *Vices* being such indignities and contumelies unto humane nature, as can never find any countenance from this Supreme part of it: 'Tis the prerogative of our Reason, that it discriminates us from, and elevates us above beasts: Nor can it ever be brought to resign this so glorious a privilege, assent to the admission of those brutish appetites

petites which would over-run the *Soul*, level its *superior* with its *inferior* faculties; confound the distinction of *Rational* and *Sensitive*, and in a word, render the *Beast* so ravenous as to eat up the *Man*. Yet *thus* it is in those sordid Sins of *Intemperance* and *Uncleanness*, unless perhaps they are so much worse than *Beastial* that I wrong the generality of the Brutes in the comparison, it being only some few of them, the very *Beasts* of the *Beasts* that are guilty of any such *Excesses*, for generally their *Appetites* do not transgress the regular ends of *Nature*, they know no such disease as *Surfetting*, but eat to satisfy *Hunger*, and couple at such seasons as best tend to preserve their kind; and then 'tis to be consider'd how base, how *degenerous* a descent it is for us to stoop, not only below our *own* nature, but *theirs*; what a *solitude* these vices reduce us to, that not so much as the nobler sort of *Beasts* will bear us company, we must wander upon the *mountains* to court a *Goat*, we must rake the *mire* to find a *Swine*, before we can furnish our selves with any *Associates*: And sure all this so open an *Hostility* against-Reason, that it can by no means be her interest to abet it. Ask her whether she would be prest to death with loads of meat, whether she would be drown'd in floods of drink, whether she would be suffocated with the noisome vapours of putrefaction and rottenness, and the answer she gives to these tells you her sense of *Gluttony*, *Drunkenness* and *Uncleanness*: Alas she suffers from them the most barbarous outrages, is invaded not only

in her *Authority*, but her very *Being*, and therefore even upon the so celebrated principle of self-preservation, must muster all her forces to vindicate the injury and defend her self. And then certainly *Christs Commands* of *Sobriety* and *Purity* must needs be entertain'd with all *Alacrity* and *Gladness*, as an accession of *strength* to her party, an *aid* to assist her in that just and necessary *War*.

AND as *Reason* thus pronounces against the sins of the *Flesh*, so in the next place does it certainly against those of the *World*. *Mammon* himself will not be able to bribe this *Judge*, but when *Christs Precept* of *Charity* and *liberality* comes before this *Tribunal*, it will infallibly be not only *acquitted* but *magnified* and *applauded*, be call'd from the *Bar* to the *Bench*, Commissioned like the *Jews*, *Hest. 9. To bear rule over them that hated them*, to dissipate at once the wealth and the covetousness of the *Worldling*; have the *Keys* put into its hand, that it may have free access to his *Coffers*; this certainly must be the event of this trial, for 'tis confessedly the part of *Reason* to *dispose* every thing to those *uses* which are most *proper* and *advantageous*, such as may bring in most *real benefit* to the owner. Now what other employment of *wealth* is there (after competent accommodations are provided) which can contribute to a mans *Felicity*? If it be laid out like the *Rich mans* in the Gospel in *delicious Fare*, or *Purple* and *fine Linnen*; certainly it makes no least approach towards it. First, for excessive *Fare*, if a man be not *excessive* too in the eating,

eating, what does he *enjoy* of it? *Meat* has no natural propriety to the *Eye*, and can make no impressions of pleasure there; but if he be *voracious* and intemperate, 'tis then so far from making him *happy*, that it dejects him into the *forlorn condition*, even now mentioned, sets him at odds with his *reason*, his very *manhood*, nay, I may add with his very *sense* too; the displacencies that he receives by the consequences of his excess, far outweighing all that is grateful in it. This is well describ'd by the *Wise man*, *Ecclus.* 31. 19.

A S for the *gayety* of *Apparel* that can never in sober judging be thought any *advantage*, 'tis that which only *Youth* and *Folly* puts a value upon, and as we out-grow the *one*, so we do the *other*: All that is convenient in *Cloaths* is as well, nay, better provided for without it: A *rich suit* is only *heavier*, not *warmer* than a plain; and it is a kind of prodigy to see *how heavily vanity*, which is in its self so *light*, sits upon some men; who are content even to make themselves *Porters*, so their *Tailors* may lay on the *burthen*: And thus in many other instances the fineness of *Cloaths* destroys the ease, so that it often *helps* men to pain, but can never *rid* them of any; the body may be languishing and infirm under the most splendid cover: *Herods royal apparel* secures him not from being *eaten with Worms*; and *Lazarus his Ulcers* would have been never the less *painful*, though they had been *wrapt in Dives his fine Linnen*.

O R if the *Wealth* be laid out on any other part of that the world calls *greatness*, as an *Honourable*

*retinue, Troops of attendants, and the like; the return will be no less empty: Multitudes of unprofitable Servants being a great burthen, but no degree of advantage; alas does my Meat relish ever the better, because my Table is surrounded with Waiters; or when I go out, does my train of followers make the Air the more refreshing to me, does not rather the Dust they raise make it less, annoy and stifle me? As for matter of business, the number of Servants tends rather to hinder than advance it; daily experience attesting, that in crouds of domesticks every one of them thinks his idleness will be hid: The care of doing and the guilt of omitting is transferr'd from one to another, and none has any farther thought, than how he may quit himself either of the burthen or the blame; so that upon the final account all that accrues to a Master by the greatness of his family is the encrease of his care in the regiment of it: A great deal of vigilance and circumspection being requir'd, to keep it in any tolerable order, and if it be not so kept, his House becomes a wilderness, and himself a prey to the Beasts he feeds: The licentiousness of the Servant redounding more ways than one to the damage of the Master.*

IF we should now proceed more minutely to every other single expence which vanity and pride suggests, we should certainly find the like success of our inquest; nothing of real felicity, but on the contrary the vanity so interwoven and incorporate with vexation of Spirit, that 'tis impossible to sever them: So that thus to employ ones  
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riches is rather to *suffer* than *enjoy* them; but if we suppose a man on the other side such a *Reverer of his wealth*, that he dares not *employ* it at all, unless it be at the *bank*, for the bringing in of more, that keeps it as men do beasts reserv'd for breed, manumit them from all work but that of propagation. Such a person is surely of all others, the farthest from receiving any advantage by it: he converts it from a *Servant* into a *Tyrant*, and sad experience shews us the calamity of such a transmutation. It has been always held the *severest treatment of Slaves and Malefactors damnare ad Metalla*, force them to dig in Mines; now this is the *Covetous mans lot*, from which he is never to expect a *release*, as being his *own* remorseless and more than *Egyptian task-master*: and the parallel holds too, in the gainlessness as well as laboriousness of the work; Those wretched creatures buried in *Earth* and darkness were never the richer for all the *Ore* they digg'd, no more is the *insatiate Miser*, he has no power to *dispose* of any of his *acquests*; and though he calls them *his*, yet alas he *possesses* them no otherwise than a *Prisoner* does his *Goal*, a *Mad-man* his *Chains*, they are only *Instruments* of his *Thraldom*, and the getting more serves only to add more weight to his Shackles; and certainly *Wealth* can be no way worse dispos'd, than thus to buy so base a *Servitude*.

AND now since neither the *luxurious* spending, nor the *covetous* keeping can *advance* us one step towards any thing that can be call'd

happy; but do on the contrary engage us upon toil and misery: *Wealth* seems to be a very oppressive burthen, such as we can neither cast off, nor safely bear; and truly so it is till *Charity* comes into our Aid; which as the proper *Element of Wealth*, renders that *light* which gravitates elsewhere, and as the *Elixir* unto *Metals* transforms them into *Gold*, stamps *purity* and *price* upon them: by freely giving, endows the *Donor* with what ever he bestows; enriches *him*, and what is more, enriches *wealth* its self. Without this *Art of using*, and disposing our estates, we are those *Indians* who change their *Gold* for *Glass*: that silly *Fisher-man*, who having found a *Mass of Ambergreece*, employd it to the *liquoring of his boots*; are foolish to the height of *Midas* in the Fable, who being promis'd to have what ever he would wish, made his demand that every thing he toucht might presently be *Gold*, and run the hazard that he did of being starv'd by our unhappy affluence: men say indeed that *Gold by preparation* becomes a *sovereign Cordial*, but certainly it never does rejoyce the heart so much as when *Charity* is the *Chymist*, the *poor mans hand* is the best *Limbeck* to extract this *Magistery* and *tincture*, the *flames of love* will really perform those *Miracles*, they of the *Furnace* boast of, and would they employ themselves in this *laboratory*, they would find the *omnipotent efficacy* they dream of, sooner in this way of *dissipating*, than in all their *Arts*, or rather *Fancies* of generating *Gold*. 'Tis certainly a most generous and enlivening *pleasure* which re-

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sults from a *seasonable liberality*; When I see a man struggling with *want*, his very spirit as well as body stooping under the pressure; if I then relieve him, the *humane nature* within me which is common to us both, does by a kind of *Sympathetick motion* exult and raise up its self, but if I have any *piety* that must do it much more; for as the *former* shew'd me *my own image* in my poor brother, so *this* shews me *Gods*; and how transcendent a satisfaction must it be, to have thus rescued him who bears so divine an impress, to have paid some part of *gratitude* to my Creator for my own *being*, by making my self in my low sphere the giver or preserver of that life, which he first breath'd into another. *This*, and this only is the *way* to raise a *felicity* out of *wealth*; and surely since the attaining of *happiness*, is the one grand *pursuit* of our *Reason*, that must even before it has subjected its self to the *Faith of Christ*, give assent to the *Prudence of his Command* in *this* as well as the former instances.

BUT there remains a *Precept* of our Saviours allied to this; which seems by no means to *comport* and *hold a correspondence* with the dictates of *right Reason*: the *taking up the cross*, and *suffering for righteousness sake*; which contradicts the fundamental law of self preservation; and the great end of being, *felicity and happiness*. But this *suggestion*, how specious soever it appear, is utterly *fallacious*; for 'tis no good consequence, that because *Reason* aims at our being *happy*, therefore it forbids us all *voluntary sufferings*, since

that the case may be so set, that *such a suffering* may be the *fairest medium* left us to our *happiness*. 'Tis a known rule that *of two evils, the least is to be chosen*; and the election of the lesser ill, though it be no *absolute*, yet is a *comparative* good; and its *attainment* as far as the necessity of our affairs permit, is our *felicity*: and reason can provide no farther. Now this is the estate of the present instance: *two evils* are propos'd, a *Natural* and a *Moral*; the *Natural*, though in its self to be averted, yet much inferiour to the *Moral*, and then *Reason* soon resolves the *Dilemma*, that the *Natural is to be chosen*: all that can be question'd in this affair, is *whether Reason define the moral evil to be the greater*, but this can bear no long dispute with any who consider but the *Nature of Reason*, which being seated in the *upper soul* of a man, is no way concern'd in those *ills*, which make their impression on the *sensitive part*, but *Moral* ills strike higher, invade the *mind*, cloud the *reason*; nay, often depose it from its regiment, as is too frequently exemplified in the force of vicious habits, and therefore by how much our *reason* is superior to our *sense*, so much are those to be accounted the *greatest evils*, which assault that *nobler part* of us. This certainly will now be the *determination* of Reason, if she may be permitted the freedom of her vote: for thus was it formerly where she bare the most sway, and uncontrouled rule: The wisest and best considering of *humane*, as well as *divine Authors* having establisht it as an undoubted *Aphorism*,

rism, that honest is to be preferr'd before both gainful and pleasant: so that nothing renders a man so deplorable, as that which violates his integrity; nay they have generally gone higher, exhorted men to become voluntiers in vertues warfare, not to suspend their sufferings till they were forc't out by the competition of a crime; but offer themselves free oblations. Thus to suffer for ones Countrey or ones Friend, was thought so worthy, so heroick a thing, that noble and ingenuous spirits were amulous of it: and it was so stated a case that Epictetus forbids a man, on such an occasion to consult with the Oracle, whether he should do it or no, it being necessary to be done, what ever ill success or ruine be predicted, ὅτι ὁ θάνατος σημαίνει, ἢ πέρσεως μέγας σάμαλος, ἢ οὐ γινῆ, and how serious they were in these perswasions, some of them have practically evidenced, as having suffered very considerable pressures, nay death its self rather than they would bow to the predominant vices of their Age, or omit the occasion of eminent vertue. Aristides would be just in spite of Ostracism. Regulus observant of his Oath made to a faithless Enemy, though Death and Torment attended the Performance. Lycurgus to perpetuate to his Citizens the benefit of his good Laws, as subtly designs perpetual Banishment unto himself, as others use to contrive for Honour and for Empire there. Codrus redeems the safety of his Army with his own Death: Curtius makes himself a Martyr for his Countrey, and Socrates in the stricter sense becomes one for his God: laid down his life in attestation

testation of that most *fundamental truth* and leading *article of Faith*, *πιστις εν ενα θεω*, the belief of one God. And yet we find not that *those Times*, which were so *ill* as to shed his *Bloud*, were yet so *bad* as to defame his *Memory*, he's not recorded either as *fool* or *hypocondriack*; nor have his *sufferings* struck him out of the list of *Philosophers*: but he stands there the more conspicuously in those *bloody Characters*; and however the credit of the *Oracle* may be otherwise disparaged, it never was on this account, that it had declared *Socrates* to be the *wisest of Men*. And yet both he and the rest, had either *none*, or very *imperfect* confus'd apprehensions of a future reward, when they engaged on present Suffering, and death its self: So that we might be tempted to imagine, that some strange change and transmutation has now befalln *Vertue*, that it has put on so much a *distant* appearance from its *ancient* self, that the accession of new obligations, and higher hopes, should absolve, avert and utterly dispirit us; infomuch that what was *Constancy* in a *Heathen*, should be *Folly* in a *Christian*. Certainly this is a *Metamorphosis* of our own making, we look through deforming *optick glasses*, such as our *Avarice* or effeminate *Sensualities* convey into our hands, which give not only *strange* and gasty, but withall *ridiculous shapes*; but if we would consult our *Reason*, that would shew us things in their *proper forms*. *Vertue* and *Reason* are both the same they were so many hundred years ago, and where the *Object* and  
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the faculty admit of no *mutation*, 'tis impossible there should really be any such *variable appearance*. If *Socrates* were so zealous for the *one God*, that he chose rather to relinquish his *life*, than to consent to, or but connive at the *profane rivalry of Polytheisme*, and yet be no Fool; certainly we may as surely transcribe his copy: and though the particular Article may not be the same; yet if it be any thing wherein vertue is concern'd, the cause is no less warrantable: he that suffers for a *practical Point*, is no more a prodigal of his pains, than he that lays them out on the highest *Speculative*. The *Commandments* may have as good *Martyrs* as the *Creed*; for the same *Authority* has requir'd our *Obedience* to the *one*, that exacts our *Faith* of the *other*. Nor is there any necessity of *Heathen* or *Jewish Tribunal*, to convert our sufferings to *Martyrdom*; we may receive that crown from the hands of those that own the same faith with us. Those that say with the most seeming vehemence *let the Lord be glorified*, may yet hate and cast out their brethren for his name sake, *Isa. 66. 5*. He that tells me I fear not *God so much* as he, may yet persecute me for honouring the *King more*; and my *Bloud* pour'd out upon that account, becomes an *acceptable Sacrifice* to him, who has commanded my *Subjection* to the *Higher Powers*. He who calls *Christ* his *Head*, may yet rend and tear his *Body*; and if I love its communion so well, as to take my share in the *Massacre*, I approach toward that dignity and comfort *S. Paul* so glories

in, of filling up that which is behind, of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his bodies sake which is the Church, Col. 1. 24. He that mulets the more Indeliberate Oaths, may yet enjoyn a solemn Perjury: and if I chuse he should rather make havock of my Goods than my Conscience; my Spoils become not more monuments of his rapine, than my piety; they plead my Innocence before him who will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain: and how profanely soever my Wealth is dispos'd by him that seizes it: 'tis accounted to me as cast into the Treasury; and so 'tis possible I may at once vie with the Rich-men in the greatness of the oblation, and with the poor Widow too in that higher circumstance of its being all. In sum, the opportunities of Martyrdom are not restrained to those points wherein Christians differ from Jews or Heathens, but extend to all wherein we Christians differ from our rule, the commands of our blessed Master. If I suffer for my Constancy to any of them, I have certainly my place in Gods Martyrology, as well as if I had fallen under any of the ten Persecutions. God was not so partial to the primitive Christians as to allow them the Monopoly and enclosure of that dignity; if they as our elder Brethren had a double portion, yet there is still a childs part left, for every one of us enough to testify our Legitimation, and secure us from the brand of Bastardy, Heb. 12. 'twas S. Pauls indefinite Affirmation, and all times since have borne witness to the truth of it. That all that will live godly in Christ

*Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* Some unfashionable *Vertues* there have been in every Age, which have whetted, if not the *Swords*, yet the *Tongues* of men: and those that happen not to fall under *Abels* persecution, must not hope to escape that of *Isaac*: if they meet with no *Gain* to kill, they will undoubtedly with an *Ishmael* to mock them. But in what dress soever our *Sufferings* appear, a good *Cause* divests them of their frightful shape, pulls off the ugly vizard, and shews us a *Beauty* that lay there conceal'd; and that not only to the Eye of our *Faith* but our *Reason* too. *Fortitude* was a *Vertue* before *Christianity* had a name in the world; and the very instinct of our *Nature* whispers within us, the baseness of being baffled out of a *Truth* or *Vertue*; yet such a despicable *Coward*, is every man that wants this passive *Valour*, without which the active must find another name, *Rage* or *Phrensie* it may be, in some perhaps natural *Courage*, or sanguineness of temper in others, but true *Valor* it is not, if it knows not as well to suffer as to do. That mind is truly great, and only that which stands above the power of all extrinsick violence; which keeps its self a distinct principality independent upon the outward man, so that it is not subjected to its fate, that can be free, when the body is fast bound in *Misery* and *Iron*, sound and healthy when that groans under torture, and is never more strong and vital, than when that languishes and expires; and this is so desirable, so transcendent a privilege, as *Reason* cannot but aspire to: and this is  
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it to which this excellent *Precept* of Christ advances us when we thus suffer for righteousness sake, our Minds are all light what darkness soever involve our exterior part, and is like *Goshen* exempt and secure, when that falls under all the *Plagues* of *Ægypt*.

AND what reason thus embraces for its self, 'tis not imaginable that it should reject, because 'tis richly clad, that the *Race* should seem the more tedious, because there is a *Crown* within view; or that the glorious *Rewards* our Christianity proposes to our constancy, should be esteemed as *Menaces* and *Threats*, Temptations to desert or turn Apostates. No certainly, *Reason* cannot dispute, and make an *Inference* so utterly *Illogical*, but will rather use it as an *enforcement* of its former *Conclusion*, establish it the more firm and immovable by having the *Basis* thus enlarged, having *Reward* added to *Vertue*, and *Happiness* entail'd on *Duty*. If in the competition between two Evils, *Reason* pronounce the *lesser eligible*: Much more will she resolve, when the contest is 'twixt good and evil, the greatest Evil and the greatest Good; and chuse that *Excellence* which though *Superlative* in its self, is more endear'd and heightned by *Comparison*. If I violate my *Reason*, if I renounce *Vertue*, though bare and naked, then surely I do it yet more when she is thus *accomplisht* and adorn'd; when *beautified* on purpose to allure the eye and take the *Heart*. When over and above the positive donation of *Happiness*, she adds a rescue and release from *Misery*, and equally

equally obliges by the distant prospects of a *Hell* and *Heaven*. So that not only the *Gospel* promises, but even *menaces* and *threats* become a *Weapon* in the hand of *Reason*, when she stands upon her guard, and fights for *Vertue*. If *sin* present its self as my *Protector* from a *temporal* Calamity, *Reason* will tell me hence, that the profer is insidious, it exposes me to that which is *infinitely worse* than what it pretends to save me from; and that not only in the former respect of *Guilt*, but in that of *Punishment* also. What a cheat is it to keep me out of the *Dungeon*, and send me to the *bottomless Pit*, to save me from a *temporary Fire*, and thereby mark me out as *Fuel* for *eternal Flames*; to take me out of *their hands* who can kill the *Body*, to put me into *his* who can destroy both *Soul and Body in Hell*. *Reason* tells me I am to abhor the *Turpitude* and *foulness* of a *Crime*; and it tells me too, I am to dread the *Misery* and *Smart* of it also. It would not have me wallow in the *mire*, though it were *safe*, much less when it is full of *Asps* and *Vipers*, which will infallibly sting me to death. It cries out with *Joseph*, *How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* And it cries out with *Esay* too, *Who can dwell with everlasting Fire?* In a word, by the domestick native *light* of the *Candle of the Lord* set up within our *breast*, it shews the ugliness of *Sin*; and shews it too by the affrightful dismal *blaze* of those *unquenchable flames* it kindles: Thus by the different *Arguments* of terror and endearment, of love and fear, of interest and duty, *Reason* asserts this  
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scorn'd, decried, neglected *Precept* : Take her as meer *Paynim* abstracting from the expectation of reward or punishment ; or take her as a *Prose-lyte* to *Christ*, contemplating his promises and threats, if there be *Honesty* or if there be *Religion*, in either instance the Soul must still conclude, that *Affliction* is to be chosen rather than *Iniquity*.

AND if it be reasonable thus to resist even unto blood striving against sin, if *Reason* blow the *Trumpet*, sound the *Alarm* to this solemn *War*, then surely it prescribes something of *Martial* discipline to prepare and dispose us for those *Combats*. No expert *General* will bring a company of raw untrain'd men into the *Field*, but will by little bloodless skirmishes instruct them in the manner of the *Fight*, teach them the ready managery of their *Weapons* ; and of this sort are all those voluntary *Self-denials*, and lighter austerities which *Christianity* commends to us, which become necessary not simply for themselves, but as instruments towards a higher end. The *Military* fame the *Romans* had in the world was achieved by the exact discipline of their *Camps*, enuring their *Souldiers* to labour and hardship. And, as *Tacitus* tells us, when a long *Peace* had slackned the reins of discipline, that active *Humour*, which was wont to be spent on the *Enemy*, recoil'd, and flew in the face of their *Commanders*, begat nothing but *Mutinies* and disorders ; and certainly 'twill be the same in our *Christian warfare*, if we abandon our selves to *Ease* and *Sloth*, never attempt to wrestle with a difficulty,  
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but keep our selves in the posture the *Israelites* Camp was in at *Moses's* descent from the Mount, eating and drinking, and rising up to play; our appetites will grow licentious and insolent, past our controule and guidance. If we treat them with such an indulgence as is recorded of *David* to *Adoniah*, never say so much as *why hast thou done this*; 'tis not to be expected but they will Rebel though a *Solomon* sit in the Throne. For alas, how is it imaginable, that he who never denied himself any the *smallest* or *most trifling* pleasure he had a mind to, shall on a sudden deny *all* in the gross; he who has projected *many*, but never wav'd *one* Opportunity of shewing his *Wit*, how shall he find in his heart to become a *Fool* for *Christ*. He that has gratified his *Palate* with all that pretends to be gultful to it, how shall he descend to the *bread of Affliction*; or he that never tried to miss a Meal, how will he entertain the unwelcome contrariety of not knowing where to get one. He who has never abated any thing of the utmost *Pomp* he could reach, how will he brook the want of *necessaries*; or from his House seil'd with *Cedar*, and painted with *Vermilion*, be content with his *Saviours* Lot, *not to have where to lay his head*. In short, how shall he who never could pare off any of the *Excrescencies*, the meer *Vanities* and *Gaieties* of an estate, part with it *all*; or lay down that *life* for *Christs sake*, from which he never substracted one *smallest Pleasure*. Suffering is a thing to which the *sensitive* part of us has an *Innate Aversion*, and Aversions are not to

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be subdued at once, but by gentle and easie degrees; and custom must have introduc'd a second nature, before that original part of our temper will be supplanted. As 'tis therefore highly reasonable for every man to aspire to the *Dominion* of himself, to keep his *Affections* within his own *Power* and *Command*; and though he have no *Interest* at all in the *greater*, enjoy a sovereignty in the *lesser World*: So in order to that, 'tis as reasonable to discipline and tame them by some voluntary *Acts* of restraint, like *Hannibal*, sometimes to pass by that water to which his thirsts do most importunately invite him. To try by little skirmishes what strength and skill he has, before he runs the fatal hazard of a *Battel*. To deny himself in the *lesser* instances, that so when the *greater* come, they may not have the disadvantage of *Uncouthness* and perfect *Strangeness* to inhanse their *Difficulty*; and this must certainly be acknowledg'd reasonable, or else we must condemn almost all the receiv'd *Rules* of humane transactions, which generally have this for their ground-work, that men must pass through the first *Principles* and lowest *Rudiments* of any Art, before they can arrive at its height. Men serve *Apprentiships* to Trades, and think not themselves the first day *Masters* of their craft; we advance in *Learning* by leisurable and slow steps, and skip not from the *A B C* to the *Metaphysicks*: And certainly the skill of *Christian suffering* is not the easiest of all *Trades* or *Sciences*; but will require some time of *Initiation*, many repeated *Trials* and *Essays* to bring us into  
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an acquaintance with it : To convince our *Understandings*, and perswade our *Wills*, that to lose our lives is to save it ; and to be faithful unto the death, is the best way to gain a *Crown of life*.

IF I should now proceed to every other *Precept* of Christ, and examine it by the *Rules* of *sober Discourse*, we should infallibly find them so rational as befits the *Laws* of him who is the *eternal Reason*, but having made these *Essays* in some of the most oppos'd Instances, I shall presume these may pass as the *Representatives* of all the rest ; and the acquittal these have receiv'd at the *Tribunal* of Reason virtually involve them all.

AND now since both *Conscience* and *Reason* have pronounc'd the same of Christ's *Laws* that *Pilate* did of his *Person*, that they find in them no fault at all ; methinks *Judges* should have the same *priviledge* that is allowed to private *Men*, that in the mouth of two every word may be establisht : But if any man be so scrupulous as not to rest in the sentence of less than a *Triumvirate*, let him in *Gods name* bring in a *Third*, and when his vicious *Appetites* ( which were before excepted to as parties ) are set aside, he cannot be distracted in his *Choice*, there being but *One* more that can possibly be call'd in, and that is *Experience*, which being a *Judge* that himself must create, he can not fear it should be prejudic'd against him ; so that he may entertain full confidence of its *Integrity* : And no less may he do of its *Ability*, this being the most infallible of humane determinations, such as often corrects the error of *Speculation*;

on; and shews us the vanity of concluding what is practicable in matter from being demonstrated in the Scheme or Diagram: The guidance of an illiterate Traveller in the way that he has gone, being far more useful to a Stranger in his journey, than the best Maps and most exact Descriptions of Geographers. But then it must be indeed Experience, and not only some slight and transient Essay. We call not him an *experienc'd Physician* that has had one Patient, or a *Lawyer* that has pleaded one Cause. Experience is the daughter of Time, and is made up of many successive Trials, as a Habit is of multiplied Acts: And to the Verdict of such an Experience Christs Precepts will not fear to stand; let a man put himself into a settled course of Obedience to them, abstain so long from all prohibited Commissions, as may wear out the rank Taste wherewith his Palate has been season'd, and leave it free and disengag'd, and then infallibly he will find such a savour and sweetness in those virtues, that he will wonder how he came to be cheated into an opinion of their being bitter and unsavory; and will have no appetite to return to his Onions and his Garlick after he has thus been fed with Quails and Manna. That this will be the event of this experiment there is all ground of certainty, and when the trial is once made, so irrefragable an evidence will follow, that it will not leave a man the power to doubt: Only in the interim so much belief is requisite, as may let him in to the demonstration, make him set to that Practice from whence he is to reap all this: And if  
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any man be so much a *Sceptick*, as not to have *faith* enough to put him on the *adventure*, I should at once for his *conviction* and *punishment*, wish but that he might a while extend the same *distrust* to Affairs of *common life*: Let him doubt whether his *meat* be *savory* and *refuse to eat*; whether his *cloaths* be *warm* and so *go naked*; whether his *house* be *firm* and *lye without doors*: and when he has a while thus smarted under his own *discipline*, let him but apply the *wisdom* he has thus bought to the present *instance*, and it will unquestionably resolve his *scruple*; or if he be still too *Impatient* to attend the ripening of his *own Experience*, let him make use of *other mens*. Let him appeal to any who has inur'd his *neck* to Christs *yoak*, and ask him whether it be *galling* and *pinching*, or whether it be not *ease*, nay *gracious*. Let him ask one who by repeated restraints hath subdued and tamed his *natural rage* or *pride*, how he likes the *change*, and undoubtedly he will tell him, 'tis no less *happy* than a *calm* is after the noise and danger of a violent *Tempest*, or the ease of a broken *Imposthume*, after the painful gathering and filling of it. Let him ask one who has divested himself of all his *sensual sins*, whether by their *absence* he now discern not their *necessity*, and he will tell *him*, 'tis but the same the *primitive Christians* had of those *Beasts skins* wherein their *persecutors* had clad them, whose only use was by *deforming* to fit them for *devouring*. Let him come to the converted *Mammonist*, and ask him which he finds the better *Treasury*, his *own Coffer*

or the *poor mans* Bowels, and he will be able to assure him, he is become *much richer* by having *less in store*. Let him come to the devout *Ascetick*, and ask him what *taste* he finds in *Daniels* unpleasant bread, *Dan.* 10. 3. and he will tell him *infinitely more* than ever he did in *Dives* delicious fare, that cloy'd and surfeited the *flesh*, this nourishes and supports the *spirit*. Nay finally, let him come to him that is actually *suffering for righteousness sake*, and he will exemplifie to him the *Beatitude* which Christ has pronounc'd of such: Let him visit *Paul* and *Silas* in the *prison* and he shall hear them *singing*; *Peter* and the other *Apostles* after their *stripes* and beating, and he shall find them *rejoycing*: And *Stephen* amidst the Throng of his *murderers* and *Tempest* of their *stones*, and he shall observe him overlooking them all, and entertaining himself with a more *pleasant prospect*, seeing the *Heavens open'd* and *Jesus standing at the right hand of God*; and why should not other mens successes animate our endeavours here? In temporal affairs it seldom misses to do it. The *Trophies of Miltiades* at *Marathon* disturb'd *Themistocles* his sleeps, till he had rais'd unto himself and *Countrey* more glorious ones at *Salamine*: *Cesar* while he views *Alexanders* Image upbraids his own slackness with the memory of his conquests, and inspirits himself to great attempts. He that returns with a *rich freight* from a *new-found-Land* encourages others to *Trade thither* also: Nay, even a *begger* speeds not well at an *Hospitable door*, but he is able to send *sholes* up-  
on

on the like hopes: Much less does he that has found a *treasure* need to use his *Oratory* to invite *partakers*; and why then should those *few* that have made this more precious *discovery* be forc'd to *monopolize* it, as not being able to *draw in partners*; yet God knows, thus it is, those that hear of no *rarity* but they long for it, as *David* after the waters of *Bethlehem*, can yet hear the same *David* cry out, *how sweet the Lord is!* and yet have no curiosity to taste it: Those whom the very name of *Liberty* so captivates, that they sacrifice all that is really valuable to that *Chimera*; can hear the *Apostle* speak of the *glorious liberty* of the *sons of God*, and yet like hardned *Gally-slaves* despise the *Manumission*. Those that hunt after *pleasures* till the very *pursuit* become an unsupportable *pain*, can be told of those *rivers of pleasures* wherewith God offers to quench their thirst, and yet inflict on themselves the *rich mans torment*, and deny so much as to *dip the tip of their finger* toward the *cooling* their own *flames*. Good God what strange *infatuation* is this, that while there is so much of *vicious envy* in the world, there should be nothing of *vertuous emulation*: That mens heat and vigour should all spend its self in childish pursuits, and leave them thus cold and stupid to their great and *serious* concerns. And what remains to him that ponders this *Epidemick* folly, but to breath out *Moses's Wish*; *O that men were wise*; or if that be too hopeless a vote, *O that men were not so destructively foolish*; that their rashness and Error might be confin'd to

their lower interests : And as *fools* are treated, *be kept from dealing in things of consequence* ; that they would not govern their Souls by such an absurd kind of managery, as they will not trust with the meanest of their outward concerns. And if this might but be obtain'd, if this *fatal Oscitancy* which has benumm'd and frozen them were but *cast off*, they would then from the report of the *good Land* be animated to their journey; and rather chuse to make the concurrent Testimonies of others arguments to encourage them, than *leave* them as Hand-writings to *appale*, or *Witnesses* to *condemn* them. And he that shall thus borrow other mens *experience* with this *design* of *copying it out*, and lays it as a foundation for his own, thereby possesses himself of one of the greatest *advantages* of the *communion of Saints* ; kindles himself at their *fire* till he grows bright and high as it ; combines his *flame* with theirs, and so encreases the *Ardors* of them both ; follows *Example* till himself grows *exemplary*, and in one *Act receives and gives*. But he that thus sets out, must remember, that it is more than the Journey of one day he has to go; he must not think (as I said before) that every little *superficial attempt* is that *Experience* which he is in quest of : He that thus phantasies will be expos'd to a very dangerous deceit, for 'tis sure there is in all *habits* such a *force*, that they are not to be dispossest but by a contrary violence, and therefore he that has been under the power of any vicious *custom*, enters at first into a state of *hostility*, has such a tough *opposition*,

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as rather finds him *Work* than *Pleasure*: Now if he shall upon this first *Essay* pronounce, he is like to pass a very *unjust sentence*: Let him fight on a while till he have got some ground, and then though the *War* afforded him *little* pleasure, the *Victory* will yield him *much*. Every repeated defeat he gives his *Adversary* will be a new triumph to him, and what the *Romans* courted as so great a *Dignity* he may every day enjoy. But then as he advances farther to the completing of his *victories*, so he does of his *Pleasures* too: when his irregular *appetites* are so subdued, that they rarely make *insurrection*, this is such a state of *tranquillity* as gives him leisure to discern, and enjoy the delights of *Christian* virtue, and will teach him to reproach the highest *Panegyrick* he ever heard of it as flat and imperfect: so infinitely will he find it exceed the utmost *description*, that he will say with the *Queen of Sheba*, *the one half was not told him*. This is the rich prize which they shall obtain that *run* the race, but it is not awarded to the *first step*; and hence it is so many fail of it, that when they find the uneasiness which attends the breaking off a *custom*; this is such a *Gyant*, a son of *Anak*, as turns them back discourag'd from the *Canaan* they went to view. But alas this discovers how small a stock of *Resolution* they carried out with them; for where men set out with *heart* and *appetite*, 'tis not such little *difficulties* that will dismay them: if it be but their *sports* they are engag'd in, it serves to deceive the sense of many uneasinesses, nay often dangers,

dangers, he that is but in chafe of a silly *Hare* is so keen upon it, that he feels not the weariness of a whole days motion, and if he meet with a *hedge* in his way will rather leap it with *hazard* than be diverted from his Game. But 'tis sure in their sins they suffer far greater hardships without discouragement. The puny *drunkard* is not disheartened by the *first qualm*, but repeats his excesses till he have overcome his *queasiness*. The craft *Litigant* sits not down with one *cross verdict*, but recommences his *suit*, passes it through all *Courts*, and considers not his own *pains*, so he may either weary or force the other out of his *right*. The *Unclean person* falls not out with his sin, how sadly soever it hath macerated him, but steps out of the *hot-house* into the *Stews*, and shall men be so indefatigable in their pursuits of *Infelicity*, buy one *Torment* with another, and drive on the year in a circle of such woful Traffick, and shall *virtue* and *pleasure* be thought not worth the smallest *labour*? Can they keep themselves in a *perpetual contention* with their *ease*, their *reason*, and their *God*; and can they not endure a short *combate* with a sinful *custom*, which if it have some *uneasiness*, yet its both infinitely short of what they have suffered in the contrary compliance, and besides carries its *remedy* in its hand: For if the *Difficulty* arise only (as doubtless it does) from the confirm'dness of the *Habit*, every *Act* of resistance as it weakens the *Habit*, so it abates the *Difficulty*. It is therefore a most *unreasonable inference*, from the trouble of the first opposition,

tion, to conclude the *Impossibility* of the future; for if the *first* were but troublesome and not impossible, the *second* will have yet less of the trouble, and so be yet farther remov'd from impossibility, and the *third* than the *second*, and so on till the difficulty vanish and disappear. And if men would but assume such a *moderate courage*, as but to *keep the field*, and not to run away upon the first gun-shot, they would soon find how impotent *Assailants* they had to deal with, who can never subdue any man by *strength*, who is not first Emasculated by his own *fears*. Let us therefore to shun the reproach of so dishonourable a Defeat awake and rouse our selves, put us in a *posture of defence*: And *Satan*, who is as cowardly as any thing in the world but we, *will* as *St. James* assures us, *fly from us*. Let us upbraid our selves with our unseasonable hardness and resolution in our impieties, till we have chang'd the *scene*, grow impatient of those *servile drudgeries*, and ambitious of these *honourable adventures*. And to animate us the more, let us fix our eyes upon the glorious *prize* of the *victory*; and that not only the *final* and *eternal* in future Glory; but that *Intermediate* which offers its self as the *earnest* of *That*, the calm and pleasure of a conquering piety. The *Roman* story tells us that the *Flavianists* had so possess'd their minds with the *spoils* of *Vienna*, that they grew insensible of all *dangers* in the way to it, and even forc't their General *Antonio* to put them upon those hazards, which his wiser conduct would have declin'd. And why  
should



should not our more worthy *Hopes* excite as great an earnestness? why should not we have as great an *Appetite* to the pillaging of *Satans Camp*, plundering that infernal *Magazine* of all its *Engins* both of *Mine*, and *battery*, its stores of *arms* and *Ammunition*, leaving him naked and defenceless, unable to make any impression upon us? and this he certainly does, who by a steady *practice of virtue*, comes to discern the *contemptibleness* of those baits wherewith he allures us. He that seeks only the *praise of God*, looks upon the *applause of men* as a *blast of Air*, which possibly may demolish and destroy a *glorious building*, but cannot give *foundation or materials* to it; and therefore will not seek for, or solicit its unhappy courtships. He who desires to be *great only in the Kingdom of Heaven*, laughs at the busie *Aspirings to secular greatness*, and wonders at the force of that *enchantment*, which engages men with so extreme toil, to climb a tottering *pin-nacle*, where the standing is uneasy, and the fall deadly. He that covets to be *rich towards God*, and has inur'd his eyes to that *divine Splendor* which results from the *beauty of holiness*, is not dazzled with the *glittering shine of Gold*: considers it as a *vein of the same earth* he treads on, and despises that absurd *partiality* whereof the Prophet accuses *Idolaters*, to employ one part to the meanest uses, and fall down to the other. In a word, he that looks on the *eternal things that are not seen*, will through those *Opticks* exactly discern the *vanity*, and *inconsiderableness* of all that is  
visible

*visible and temporary*; and so will be equally unmoved with the terrors or allurements of the world, and neither frightened nor flatter'd out of his duty. And he that is thus fortified discourages and wearies out his Tempter, deprives him not only of *weapons* but of *heart* too, and drives even *Satan* himself to desperation; and when the Enemy is thus beat out of the *field*, there remains nothing but to enjoy the *victory*. When that *reluctance and resistance* of the corrupt Appetite is so weakned and subdued that a man acts with *freedom*, he acts with *pleasure* too. A heart thus set at liberty, alacriously runs the ways of Gods commandments: it faring with it as with a *Patient* that is prescrib'd exercise for health; who at first perhaps finds *lassitude and trouble* in it: but when the *obstructions* are remov'd, and *nature* disburthened of those *noxious humors* that encumbered her, that which was at first his *task*, becomes his *recreation*. For we are not to think, that it is any *innate harshness* in piety that renders the first essays of it unpleasant, that is owing only to the *indisposedness* of our own Hearts. We are in the Prophets phrase *bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke*; and if we be galled and fretted by it, 'tis because of our impatient strivings, and irregular motions under it, the yoke is really no heavier than it is afterwards when it is more tamely born: and yet the Ease is very different and unequal. And this teaches us a short way to that felicity we now speak of, to wit, That we compose our selves to such a submissive and malleable temper

temper, that Christ may come only to govern us as *sheep*, not to be put to tame us as *Tigers*. let us withdraw all supplies from our *lusts*, and not by any secret reserv'd affection give them clancular aids to maintain their *Rebellion*, and then they will not be able long to make any *vigorous opposition*, nor consequently much to disturb the *tranquillity* of those who have thus resign'd themselves to the government of the *Prince of Peace*: and if this cannot be done in such an instant, but that there will be some previous displacencies, and uneasie struglings, yet even those like the *Scorpion*, carry *Antidote* against their <sup>own</sup> ~~one~~ *stings*, when 'tis consider'd that they are but the *pangs* of the *new-birth*, they will become very supportable by the expectation of that Joy to which they tend. An enslaved people think themselves fairly advanc'd to happiness, if they can get but to make head against their oppressors, though they must expect many sore *conflicts* and sharp *engagements* before they become *Victors*: and certainly 'tis matter of inestimable joy to him, who has been under that sad spiritual slavery to be set thus upon even terms, with his sword in his hand against those, who once had him in such vassalage that he durst not lift up a thought against them; but especially when 'tis remembred with what *invincible aids* he is backt, such as will ascertain him of *victory*, if he do not treacherously defeat himself. And surely he must be of a strange *phlegmatick temper*, whom all these considerations will not enliven, convey in-  
to

to him so much spirit as to make an attempt, and engage him to do that upon so pressing, so great a concern which meer curiosity prompts men daily to in common affairs. And he that is not moulded of this cold and stubborn clay, he that has not lost one of the *elements* of mans composition, and has but a *spark* of fire in his temper, will surely have some *warmth* towards this so inviting an *experiment*: and when he has once made it, I doubt not, it will then joyn with the suffrages both of reason and conscience in approbation of *Christs Laws*, and will with *Solomon* pronounce of this spiritual wisdom, *her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*, Prov. 3. 17.

AND now it must be a strange *Violence* of impiety, that must break this *threefold cord*, that shall disannul the joint sentence of all that are competent *Judges* in this matter. This is not the strength of *Samson* that brake *withs and cords*, but of the *Legion* that pull'd in pieces *fetters and chains*; and though too many men make it their *own work*; yet certainly 'tis only the *Devils Interest*: he aspires to the rule and government of us; and to that end nothing can be more contributive than these prejudices we take up against *Christs conduct*. A *Soul* like a *Nation*, can neither bear *two Legislators*, nor be without *one*: And *Satan* having but that single competitor, our quarrelling with *Christs Laws*, is virtually an embracing of his. When we send *Christ* that rebellious message, *Nolumus hunc*

*hunc regnare*, we say to the other as the *Trees* to the *Bramble*, *Jud. 9. 14. come thou and reign over us*. And to this defiance of the one, and invitation of his opposite, he very nearly approaches, that thus defames Christs commands as irrational or severe. The traducing of a government being, we know, the immediate *praludium* to the casting it off; *libelling* the forlorn-hope to rebellion. But would God men would soberly weigh whither such a mutinous humor tends; and when our outward *Condition* has given us so many pregnant and costly *Proofs* of its ruinous *effects*, take caution that it make not the like wrack within us: that we do not madly exchange Christs gentle *Service*, and glorious *Rewards*; for Satans cruel *bondage*, and crueller *Wages*: the *golden chains* of the one which do more adorn than tie us; for the *Iron*, the *Adamantine* links of the other, which bind us till they deliver us over to those *Chains of darkness*, where our captivity shall be irreversibile. If this so reasonable, so necessary a care may be admitted; 'twill certainly confute the profane *sophistry* of our Age, silence our impious *Cavils*, and instead of providing us of the colour of an austere *Master* to excuse our *sloth*: will engage us to that *diligence* that shall supersede the use of such *shifts*, and then we may hope to see *Christianity* have a *Resurrection day* again, assume a Body somewhat of solidity and substance; which now wanders about like a *ghost* or *spectre*, a *shade* or vanishing *apparition* which leaves no footsteps behind it: and to the re-union, O let us all emulously

lously contribute, take up every one of us his dry *Bones* and bring it to the *Prophet*, or rather to *Him* who spake by that *Prophet*, to breath upon them, till at last they be cemented and inspirited in active *Duty* to shew forth the *Praises* of that *God* who hath call'd us out of darkness into his marvellous light, 1 Pet. 2. 9.

## CHAP. VI.

*A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Partial Obedience.*

**A**NOTHER sort of preposterous Considerers there are, by whom the power and force of *Christianity* is no less obstructed: and those are they that contrive not how they may most comply with it, but how they may best bend it to comport with them. That rebate its edge, or turn it only against such of their corruptions as they have least kindness for. That weigh the *Precepts* with no other design but that of taking the lightest: those to which their constitutions or other circumstances carry least repugnance; and come unto the *Gospel* not to as a law, but to a Market; cheapen what they best like, and leave the rest for other customers.

THAT thus it is with, many needs no other proof than the variety visible in the lives of several professors. One man behaves himself modestly,

deftly, and tells you his *religion* commands him *humility*, yet at the same time transgresses the as-  
trict precept of Justice, and will defraud him he  
bows to. On the contrary *another* is Just but In-  
solent, and though his Sentence do not bend,  
expects his *Clients* should. That man owns the  
purity of his religion in *visiting the fatherless and*  
*widows*, yet disclaims it again by not *keeping*  
*himself unspotted of the world*. This person is  
Abstemious but Uncharitable, will drink no  
*wine* but thirsts for *bloud*. He prays much, yet  
curses more; whilest he is meek but indevout.  
Now while the Rule is one and the same, how  
should it come, that mens Practices should so  
vary, were it not for the unequal Application: did  
they take it entire, though there might be diffe-  
rence in the *degrees*, yet sure not in the *kinds* of  
their Vertues, and as men would not differ so  
from one another, so neither would they from  
themselves, there would be then no such thing as  
a *charitable Drunkard*, a *devout Oppressor*, a *chast*  
*Miser*; *Monsters* engendred by this unnatural  
commixture of *light* with *darkness*, but *Piety*  
would be uniform and extensive, and *bring into*  
*captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ*,  
2 Cor. 10. 5. And till it be thus, *Christianity* can  
never be thought to have atchiev'd any part of its  
design, which was not aim'd against any one *single*  
*limb*, but against the *whole body* of sin. Alas,  
tis not the lopping off one of the remote *mem-*  
*bers*, that will render the remaining ones any  
whit the less vital, the having a *part* less to ani-  
mate,



mate, will rather serve to concenter the spirits, and make them more active in the rest: as we see the *pruning* of Trees, makes them more *profitick*. And this effect is very obvious among men: he who has no general dislike to vice, if he repudiate *one*, 'tis commonly that he may cleave closer to *another*; and what he defalks from some *dry, insipid* sin, is but to make up a *Benjamin's* Mefs for some other more gustful. If the *Wanton* be *sober*, 'tis odds he thinks *excess* a Rival to his *lust*, if the *Proud* man be *liberal*, 'tis because *covetousness* is inglorious; such unevennesses are caus'd not by an *unkindness* to any Sin (unless possibly that aversion which natural constitution raises in some) but by a *partiality* to one or more favourite Vices, for whose better *accommodation*, and *securer* reign, not only Vertue, but other Vices also must give place.

AND this 'tis much to be fear'd will upon a true account, be found to be the *sum* of many mens *piety*, something they think they must pay to the *importunity* of their Religion, which upbraids them so loudly that they are willing to *stop its mouth*, but yet would do it with as much *frugality*, and good managery as may be, and so consider what 'tis they can best spare: what refuse Sin which brings them in little of satisfaction, and is perhaps in competition with some other more agreeable: and *this* they can be content to devote to the *slaughter*, set it to receive all the *impressions of the sword of the spirit*; and so use it as a *buckler* to their *darling lusts*, to ward off those

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blows

blows which must else fall heavy on them; but alas this is not to *obey*, but to *delude*: to ransom a greater Sin with a *less*, and to transcribe in this matter the Counsel of *Caiphas*: to *let one die for the People, that the whole nation Perish not*. To make one forlorn guilt a Patriot to the rest, whilest in the *tempest* which threatned a general *shipwrack*, the *precious wares* are preserv'd, by throwing the *less valuable* over board.

AND truly that is commonly the event, men are so jolly and triumphant when they have worsted a *trivial inconsiderable sin*, as if they had defeated the *whole army*: this poor despicable *spoil*, is set up as their *Trophe*, and must they think witness for them both to God and man, that they are good *souldiers of Jesus Christ*: they can like *Saul* with full confidence meet the *Prophet*, and tell him they have *fulfilled the Commandment of the Lord*, 2 Sam. 15. 13. though *Agag* and the best *cattle*, the reigning and fattest *sins* be spar'd: and while they are thus secure, their sins will certainly be so also, have no disturbance or disquiet from them, but lie at Ease and rest, feed like *Canibals* upon their own kind, be nourisht by the carcases of those unlucky vices, on whom the exterminating lot hapned to fall: and by that means grow to a prodigious bulk and corpulency. And upon these terms *Satan* himself will allow us to *mortifie some sins*, nay will himself *cast the first stone at them*: and like a rooking *gamester* purposely lose these *petty stakes*, that he may afterwards sweep the *board*.

FOR

FOR if men should give themselves up universally to *all sorts of Ill*, if they should set themselves in a total opposition to *all the documents* of their *profession*, he would lose one of his most useful *engins*; there could be no such thing as a false delusive hope: they might possibly by obstinacy *harden*, or by diversion *gag* Conscience, but they could not bribe and corrupt it, make it sit down well pleas'd and satisfied with its self. For when the *threats* against disobedience shall occur to the mind of one who has in all instances disobey'd, 'tis impossible he should find any *salve*, any way of Evading the Threats, they make so directly at him: but he who can alledge for himself that he *obeys in some things*, confronts that to all Objections, and resolves he is not in the *list* of the *disobedient*: One or two such comfortable instances are as mighty; as God promis'd the *Israelites* should be, *Deut. 32. 30. one able to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight*; all fears and misgiving thoughts are dissipated and fled before them: and as once the *French King* in his return to the numerous swelling titles of the *Spaniard*, thought the bare repetition of *France, France, France*, was a full ballance to them all; so when *whole files* of great and scandalous Crimes present themselves, *one single vertue* is thought a sufficient counterpoize. He whose Conscience upbraids him with all Profaneness towards *God*, and in Sobriety towards *himself*: yet if he can but answer that he is *just to his neighbour*, he thinks he has *quit scores*,

and fears no farther reckonings : he who is immerst in all the *filthiness* both of *flesh and spirit*, has abandon'd his Mind to *pride and envie*, his Body to *lust and intemperance* ; and so sacrificed both those to *Devils* : yet if he cast but *some grains* of this estate upon the Altar ; devote any *small part* of that to God, for the uses of *Piety* or *Charity* ; he concludes that *Incense* will send up a Cloud thick enough, to obscure the other from the *Eyes* of Divine Justice, and yield so sweet a savour as will perfume him in spite of all that Noisomness : so extending old *Tobits* words beyond his meaning, that *alms, though alone, delivereth from death, and cleanseth from all sin*. He who is deep in *sacrilege* and *rebellion*, that can daringly swallow repeated deliberate *perjuries* ; yet if he can get but the demure tenderness, to *fear a sudden oath*, he is *Chymist* enough to extract a *confidence* out of that *fear*, and presumes that *formal Civility* to Gods name, shall expiate all the *real Violations* and *Contempts* of him : and while men make such use of their *partial peccemeal* obedience, it can never be the *Devils interest* to disturb them in it, to awake them out of their pleasant dream, or to exact of them to deposite those poor insignificant *remains* of their Christianity, which serve only to make them more *Supine*, not more *Safe*.

N A Y indeed his affairs are so stated, that to some he can and does, and without danger allow a yet *far greater indulgence*, he can permit them to bid much fairer than this for Heaven, and yet

yet knows the purchase is far from being made; he can see them cashier not some one *single sin*, but *whole troops* together, and yet not fear the sinking of his Cause: He can trust them so far, that as the *young man* in the Gospel, they may be pronounc'd, *Not far from the Kingdom of God*: yet as long as there is but one unmortified Lust, that can send them away *sad from Christ*, his tenure is firm enough. Herod may hear *John Baptist* gladly, nay do many things upon it, yet let him but keep *Herodias*, and she will soon be able to secure both *her self* and *Satan* against the danger of that Competition. This is indeed his main advantage that he can hold fast by the *smallest thread*; and whereas to our blifs a conspiracy and union of all Vertues is required; our *ruine* can spring from any one solitary Crime: *many rounds* make that Ladder wherewith we must scale *heaven*: whereas *one step* serves to precipitate us into the *Abyss*; so sadly verifying the Poetical Axiome, *Facilis descensus Averni*. In sum, while there is but any one *single sin* indulg'd to: that is the *Devils tedder*; and though it should be imagin'd so loose, as to give men scope to range over *all other sorts* of Vertues, to taste the sweet and feed liberally on them; yet still the *beast* is in the power of him who has fixt the line, not only to be finally led away to *slaughter*, but also to have the *length shortned*, and be either put out of the *reach*, or quite removed from the *view* of those *pleasant pastures*.

FOR though the security rais'd by such an ununiform piety is in many so exactly appportioned to *Satans interest*, that he has no cause to wish the change of his tenure; yet where the circumstances are such, as will make it useful, he can easily twist his *thred* into a *Cable*. When he thinks one *Monarch* Lust too mild a regiment, he can set up an *Athenian* Tyranny, or which is yet worse, let in the whole *populacy* of Sin upon the Soul, which like the *Egyptian Locusts* shall overrun and devour it, *not leave any green thing on the ground*, and that this is in his power we have too much reason to conclude. He is we know a cunning *sophister*, and if he has abus'd us so far as to impose one sin upon us, he may thence very regularly deduce many more, as one false Premise admitted, may be improved into thousands of false Conclusions. Indeed supposing a man resolute to adhere to one sin, he may with very good *Logick* perswade him to multitudes of others. There are but two *Objections* usually made to any Temptation; either the *offence*, or the *danger*; and these are usually objectable to one sin as well as to another; so that this *dilemma* readily offers its self: either it is reasonable to buy a *pleasure* at that price, or it is not: If it be, then contrive that the *crime* be pleasant, and that brings its *dispensation* with it: If it be not, then why dost thou live in this one sin in despite of both guilt and punishment; the *later* part of the Dilemma 'tis no part of *Satans* business to press, but the *former* he has too much advantage of pursuing successfully; if he can but dress

dress up a temptation to look invitingly, the business is done. So ridiculous a thing is an *uneven Piety*, that it even laughs it self out of countenance, and wants only temptation to become *uniform Vice*. How absurdly looks it, to see a man run away with *Joseph* from the embraces of his *Mistress*, and yet with full as great a speed accompany *Gebazi* in the pursuit of a *bribe*; and how obvious is it to conclude that the former assault was improsperous only because not manag'd with the *right weapon*; that he might have been *hir'd* that would not be *moed*? What a *mockery* is it for a man to be *zealous for God*, and *rebellious against his King*? as in the reverse, for a man to be *true to his King*, and a *rebel to his God*: and who can but think, that had either of the averted *Crimes* been cookt to their *Palats*, they might have chang'd *Messes*. Indeed 'tis not imaginable by what rules of discourse, he that embraces *one sin* should reject *another*: if it be done only upon *phancy* and *humour*, as the *repulst vice* will have reason to complain of great *partiality*, when as bad as its self is receiv'd and cherish'd; so it points out a way to attacque him more prosperously: let it shape its self to the phancy, and sure *Satan*, who can *transform himself to an Angel of light*, can soon work that easie *change*: let the *younger Brother* get on the cloaths of the favourite *Esau*, transform its self into the shape and interest of the darling sin, and it need not doubt of a free *admission*. But all this while to pretend *conscience* for such an *abstinence*, is of all other pleas the must absurd, for  
why



why should he scruple at one, that abandons himself to another. As *S. James* argues concerning the *guilt*, so may we for the *act* of Sin: He that said *do not commit adultery*, said also *do not kill*; and 'tis abusive mockery, the Souldiers *Ave Rex*, to bow to his *authority* in the *one*, and resist it in the *other*. Thus unhappy is the case of him who entertains one sin, his enclosure is broken down, and he's a common for all: he is left destitute of a reply to any temptation, and like a *bashful* person will be in danger of *yielding*, because he is ashamed to *deny*: and this I doubt not, many have found experimentally true, some sins have been committed not so much upon the force of inclination, as to be consentaneous to themselves, to silence the upbraidings of their understandings for acting so unevenly, it being impossible to give a reasonable account, why *this* and not *that*, or *that*; for when by *one bold wilful sin* a man enter'd into a *state of hostility* with God, 'tis not a *tenderness in all others* will make up the *breach*: and then they think the rule of known enemies takes place, where all civilities are disclaim'd, and the quarrel manag'd to the most advantage. The resolv'd *Adulterer* could perhaps without much difficulty be just, but when he considers that that one *Helena* of his, will certainly make a war, he thinks 'tis an impertinent *niceness* to lose a good prize, or dismiss his *covetousness* while he resolves to retain his *lust*. The incorrigible *drunkard* could perchance easily enough be *chaste*, but when he remembers that *drunkenness* ex-  
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cludes him from the Kingdom of Heaven: having made that sale of his eternal inheritance, he thinks 'tis but good husbandry to get as much as he can for it; So *treacherous a guest* is any one Sin admitted, and lodg'd in the heart, it despoils it of all its armour of defence, leaves it nothing wherewith to guard its self against any assailant; and be it *never so small* a one, 'tis like those *little thieves* which being put in at the window set the doors open to all the rest.

BUT perhaps this *danger* may be thought in some degree warded by the *natural temper* and constitution of men, which necessarily renders them unapt to *contradictory vices*, and so will secure them at least from so many as are disagreeable to their Temper: but if this should be granted, yet it confessedly leaves them open to all others, and that were certainly bad enough: he that is as *wicked*, as his *complexion* can not only encline, but permit him to be, will not want much of the utmost number of sins: but whatever we can suppose that to strike off from the tale; yet in the second place, 'tis very much to be fear'd, that will defalk nothing of the weight; he that sins to the height of his *appetite*, perhaps *power*, shall he be ever the more *innocent* because there were some *nauseated sins* which he had not Self denial enough to commit. God absolves us in proportion to the *rectitude* of our Wills, not the *nice-ness* of our Complexions: he that wills to pursue whatever he can find *gustful*, how impious soever; shall it be *virtue* in him that some Sins are

*unsavoury* and disagreeing to his *Palate*; if it should, there may so many extrinsick things be by Analogy brought in, either to swell or abate the accounts of our sin, that we shall be much to seek in the estimate of it.

BUT in the third place, even these very aver-  
sions are no infallible preservative, for if they happen to be more moderate and remiss, than the love of some other sin; that *predominant inclination* will subdue those *dislikes*, when ever its *interest* is to be serv'd, by those otherwise not *gustful commissions*. There is nothing more ordinary than to see one appetite pursued to the violation of another. A man perhaps hates *drunkenness*, not only as a *bestial*, but *uneasie vice*; yet if his *love* to Gain exceed his *dislike* to that; when that is requisite to make up the price of a *good bargain*, that *aversion* must stoop, and give way. A man despises *swearing*, as an *insipid impertinent Sin*, yet if he set any great value upon *being in the mode*, and complying with the *gentile Dialect*, that will soon debase him to what he so much contemn'd: and truly there is scarce any other account to be given of that great and foolish sin. But in no other instance is this so notoriously visible as in that of *duelling*. I need not single out any one mans particular inclination, the nature of mankind doth certainly avert both killing and being kill'd: yet when that *Phantasm*, that *Chimera* honour, has once possess'd the mind, no reluctance of humanity is able to make head against it; but it commands as uncon-  
troul'dly

troul'dly, as the *Centurion* in the Gospel, *says to this man go and he goes, to another come and he comes*: nay as Tyrannically as the great *Cham of Tartary*, who as an *Essay* of his *Soveraignty* commands whole troops to ride down precipices; nay these Aversions are not only thus violently subdued by some foreign lust, but are many times destroy'd even by force of that very vicious principle which gave them birth: for we mistake if we think they are alwaies vertuous, or so much as innocently founded; Vice is often at civil wars with its self; and the vehement inclination to one, ingenders a displacency to another; but yet such a riddle is this mystery of Iniquity, that upon the very same basis is built both the abhorrence and commission of the same Sin. For example, a Proud man as much hates to fawn and flatter others, as he loves to be flatter'd himself; yet let his pride but once work the other way, and set him upon an ambitious project, then all the mean condescensions imaginable are with ease digested, he can crouch and prostrate, and as the *Psalmist* speaks, *fall down and humble himself*, that by that descent he may rebound to the height he aims at: but still pride is the common cause of these so distant effects. In like manner the Riotous Prodigal detests covetousness, looks upon it as so sordid and base, that he brands even prudent frugality as approaching too near it; yet let him but once find the springs to grow dry which should feed his luxury; when he feels his Riot begins to exhaust and prey upon its self, then

then even that *despised Covetousness* shall be call'd in to its aid, to dig *mettal* for the Furnace to melt, and so by a strange *Antiperistasis*, *prodigality* shall beget *rapine*. Thus unhappily *prolifick* is every Sin, that it carries in its bowels the *seed* and *principle* even of those that seem the most *Heterogeneous*; and then how shall a man that has admitted but any one such teeming lust be secur'd that it shall not thus propagate, till his *Soul* become a meer *desart*, fill'd with all sorts of *wild* and *noxious creatures*.

T H E R E is but *one hope* imaginable to interpose, and that is that *Gods grace* shall prevent this exorbitant *growth of impiety* in him, and I acknowledge that is sufficient to do it, where it may have its kindly *operation*; but where it has so, it will uniformly suppress *all sin*, and therefore where *any one* continues in Force and Vigour, 'tis manifest that *operation* of Grace is obstructed, and such a man I should desire soberly to consider what assurance he has, that he who has so evacuated Gods grace in one instance, shall not do so in another? If *in spite* of that grace he can be lustful, why shall he not be as able to resist it *in favour* of Drunkenness, Sacrilege, Rebellion, or any other crime to which he shall at any time have appetite. Can he imagine that God sends forth an irresistible strength against some sins, whilest in others he permits men a power of repelling his Grace? That were to transcribe the *Syrians* absurd Phanfie, that he is *a God of the hills and not of the valleys*: No certainly, he who has his own  
unhappy

unhappy experience to attest the possibility of frustrating the Divine succours in one particular, has too sure grounds to infer the like in others. Nay alas, it does not only infer it by way of *argument* and *deduction*, but it is very apt to produce it by way of *cause* and *efficiency*: We gain a readiness to any thing by custom and assuefaction, and he who has habitually oppos'd *Grace* in the defence of a *Lust*, has deliver'd himself from that modesty which makes the first defiance uneasy, and so runs on with ease and boldness to future resistance. It faring with men in this violation of *Gods grace* as it does in that of his *Patrimony*, the first Sacrilege is lookt on with some horror, and men are fain to devise *arguments* and colours to delude their relucting *Consciences*; but when they have once made the breach, their scrupulosity soon retires; one draught of that *impious gain*, has such a *stupifying effect*, that they can without check swallow on, till the Sin flame so fiercely, that nothing but meer want of Matter can extinguish it. But admit it were possible for a man to be secur'd of his own compliance with some parts of restraining grace whilest he impugnes it in others, yet who shall ascertain him of that grace? It being Gods, implies 'tis not in our power, he may surely do what he will with his own, and though his *promise* has made a sure entail of it to all those, who *humbly seek* and *diligently use* it: yet it no where engages that it shall be the *portion* of any other; much less that it shall importunately and endlessly renew its assaults on those

those who have often repulst and put it to flight : In that case *Gods resolution* concerning the *old world* becomes applicable, *My spirit shall not always strive with man* ; and *Christ* who forbids us to *cast our pearls before swine*, will certainly never prostitute what is infinitely more precious, his *Grace* to those, who have so long trampled it under their feet ; and so those must be concluded to have done, who have persevered in any one sin : for *Grace* is uniformly opposite to all, and therefore the cleaving to any is defiance and affront to it. But we need not the help of inferences and deduction, the threats of God are express in this matter : The *Talent* is decreed to be taken from the *unprofitable servant*, who has not imployed it to the proper use, and such infallibly is *every man* who has not actuated the *Grace* given him to the subduing of every *reigning sin* ; and the *reprobate mind* mention'd in Scripture as the most dismal of all Plagues, the *ὄψις αἰδύμιος*, which yields not to the melting and the purging force of Fire, and therefore does consign to that of Hell, is founded upon the voluntary rejection of God in particular instances, *Rom. i.* How then can he, that in any one single thing so rejects him, assure himself that shall not be the event of it : That he who would not have *Christ* rule entirely in his *heart*, shall at once be put out of his *Government* and *protection* : have all those spiritual aids withdrawn, which should either assist him to *good*, or fortifie him against *ill* ; and like an outlaw'd person be expos'd to the outrage of all that will assault him.

AND



AND now would God this might be sadly pondered, that men would not be their own *Sirens*, and entertain themselves with those deceitful *melodies*, which will end in *howlings and gnashings of teeth*; that they would not think their having some few virtues, and but some few vices will serve to satisfy the design, or procure them the rewards of their Christianity: for if they should continue in this posture, and not be tempted to grow worse, they may certainly conclude 'tis because Satan finds they need not. And can they be proud of that Vertue which the Devil himself will allow them? And think themselves good enough when they are as bad as he wishes them? But even in this they have no other tenure than his Will. When he pleases for his interest, or even for his divertisement and recreation he may hurry them to all that is most enormous; convert their *Hypocrisie* to *profaneness*, their *partial Piety* to *universal Ungodliness*; they have nothing to interpose in their own Defence, not so much as a reasonable Argument to oppose to him, they have made a voluntary sale of themselves for one or more beloved sin, and now as his *vassals* he may impose on them what others he pleases: and by their doting affection to their *Rachel* take advantage also to obtrude the despis'd *Leah* upon them. And how wretched, how deplorable is this state? What a *Piety* is this that we must owe to the *Devil*, while we can be no better than he will let us?

YET this is without *Hyperbole*, the condition  
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of every man that is not sincerely uniformly Christian; every indulg'd sin gives *Satan* livery and seisin of his heart, and a power to dispose of it as he please. I know men are apt to flatter themselves with other hopes, and think that those obediences they pay to God shall like a pre-engagement disannul all after contracts made by guilt, and put them into the possession of Him who is able to *bind* that *strong man*. But God will not be necessary to such a fraud, even towards the Devil while they keep the price, enjoy that pleasure or profit wherewith he bought them, God will never interpose to defeat him of his purchase.

AND as God will not thus forcibly wrest them out of his hands, much less will he descend to a capitulation and composition with him. *God is a jealous God*, and what *jealous husband* did ever by compact divide his right with the *Adulterer*. Where he finds a persevering disloyalty he gives a bill of divorce and disclaims his relation. Yet so besotted are men, as to hope God will ratifie that alienation they have made of one part of their heart, and contentedly enjoy the rest; and as competitors use sometimes to do, share with his Rival. But alas that immortal quarrel will not be thus taken up, the difference between these irreconcilable *Antagonists* will not be so compromised. God disdains such a Treaty, nor will ever come so much as to an interview with his enemy, within the lists and recesses of one Heart. And while men labour such an accord, they are but combining

combining with *Satan* against *God* and their own *Souls*: he knows well that while he holds any part, *God* will have none, and so the whole falls to him, and then he may very safely be modest, and demand but moderately, and by that seeming difference and yielding, gain more than by all his most eager contendings. I suppose every man will disown the having this ridiculous design of compounding the strife between *Heaven* and *Hell*; but certainly it is the natural interpretation of such partial obediences, when two *Litigants* contend for something which I have in my keeping, if I divide it between them, is it not obvious to conclude I desire to compose the dispute and satisfy both parties, and is not this the very case here? 'Tis true indeed, it carries a very absurd sound, but then how more absurd is it for men to act at such a rate, that when 'tis represented to them in the truest colours, themselves are ashamed to own what they have done? And this calls loudly upon them to put themselves out of the lash of their own discipline: to recover such an innocence that they may not be forc'd with *David* to sentence themselves, when that their crimes appear in the light disguise of a *Parable*.

AND this indeed is the only proper use of all these considerations, the danger and folly are as *unuseful* as *unpleasant* speculations, unless it be in order to the reforming that wherein both are founded. Let men consider themselves, as engaged in those wild projects which even themselves look on with scorn; as ensnar'd in that unhappy

contract which has rendred them part of the *Devils* possession, and contrive how they may obliterate that reproach, and disentangle their Mortgag'd Souls.

AND for this there is but one way imaginable, and that is by quitting their hands of that which they took as the valuable consideration in that mad bargain; restoring *Satans* coyn to him, not only *principal* but *use* also: casting away the main sin and all the little appendages, which like offesets have shot out from that root; retaining nothing that has his mark and impress upon it, that so he may not pretend to any thing of theirs by right of barter or exchange. This, and this only is the way to disseise him of his Estate, to cancel those fatal Indentures which bound them to him, and till this be done, as long as they keep any part of his *wages of iniquity*, his title remains in full force, they are still his *servants*, his *vassals*.

EVEN that *redemption of Christ* has no efficacy towards the enfranchizing of such, for though it proclaim a universal *Jubile*, yet it forces liberty upon none, he that will nail his Ear to the door-post and desie a manumission, may continue his slavish state still, and indeed though *Christs* death was design'd to rescue us from the power of Satan; yet the first essay of that rescue was to redeem us from our vain conversation: And where that is not done, which is so essentially fundamental to all the rest, 'tis not possible any other part of that Redemption should be achiev'd,

chiev'd, unless we will confound the order of *Nature* as well as *Grace*, and make the *consequent* precede the *antecedent*.

LET no man therefore upon any vain hopes delay the one only expedient to his security, but pay back the *earnest-penny* he has received from *Satan*, fling away his *sin*, how pleasant or profitable soever, with the greatest Abhorrence, as knowing 'tis the *price of blood*, and that not only his *Saviours*, but his *own* too; and this immediately, lest the forfeiture be irreversibile. We know the danger of lapsing time in case of Mortgage, but here our danger is greater, because the time is so uncertain, for though God had nothing else to do in the whole transaction ('twas wholly our own work) yet 'tis he that assigns the time of forfeiture: he alone knows how far we may go in sin, before we pass the possibility of a retreat; how long he will be provok'd before he suffer his whole displeasure to arise; and how many repellings of his Grace, and quenchings of his Spirit they are to which his desertions are apportion'd. *Pharaoh's* heart was hardened by God after the *Eighth resistance*, and we have no security but ours may be *sooner*: yet if that should be taken as the standing measure, how dreadful an abode would it make to many of us? Who is there that has espoused any one *beloved sin*, that has not much oftner repeated the *acts* of it, every one of which is a resistance and a contumacy against God? Who is there that has not done it against so many express warnings and loud calls of God in his own

Conscience, which renders it yet a fuller *parallel*, and 'tis to be fear'd, too many agree with it even in the last and highest circumstance, that of the *Plagues* too, by an obstinate persisting after so many *Judgements* sent to mollifie and reclaim them; and then where the *premises* are the same, 'tis too likely the *conclusion* may be so also.

I SHALL not wish any Person so strictly to apply this case, as to conclude, that he is already in this state, but I should wish all men would apply it so far, as to infer how *possible*, nay how *probable* it is, that the very next resistance shall put them in it. 'Tis not *Pharaohs* being a *Heathen* and they *Christians* that will give them any security; it being no part of the Gospel-Covenant, that men shall be ever the longer allowed to trample upon Grace. All the difference it makes is rather on the other side; the contempts are enhans'd to a higher guilt, and consequently, the fewer acts may now serve to fill up the measure. And if their experience testifie to them, that in their particular God has us'd a greater long suffering, than he has given any grounds to expect, if the guilt of their Consciences testifie that they have committed many more acts; and yet some remaining tendernesses and regrets witness also, that they are not yet given up to an utter hardness and obduration, O let them not presume themselves safe, because they are not utterly desperate; but lay their hearts open to be stamp'd and imprest by grace, before they grow utterly inflexible; timely consider what is the design

design of this *longanimity*, and without any more strugglings and resistance suffer it to attain its aim and *lead them to repentance*.

FOR though their Souls be not yet wholly petrified, yet how know they in what an instant that unhappy *Metamorphosis* may be wrought, or if it should not be so sudden, yet 'tis certain every act of sin makes gradual approaches towards it: so that if God should not inflict it by way of *punishment*, yet the meer force of Habit would produce it by way of *natural efficacy*: And to be convinc'd of this, I should require no more, but that men would reflect, and see what effects it has already wrought, how far it has advanc'd towards that fatal point. Let them send their thoughts back through every stage and period of their sin, and observe whether as that has grown, so their tenderness and reluctance of Conscience has not abated and decreas'd: Let them but recollect what regrets and disquiets they had, when they ventur'd upon the first unlawful commission, and compare it with their present, and I doubt not they will discern a great inequality; they will find that every act of sin hath allayed somewhat of the sharpness of those pangs, and proportionably to the frequency of the repetition they approach toward insensible: and then let him whose older Habit has multiplied those *Acts*, sadly consider how few *steps* he has to the end of his unhappy journey, though no extrinick concurrent should hasten his pace. But when Gods desertion shall, as for ought he knows, it may the



next minute supervene : that as a full and violent *Wind* drives him in an instant, not to the *Harbour*, but on the *Rock* where he will be irrecoverably split.

NOR let any man fortifie himself against these terrors, by hoping that his one *single* (perhaps small) *sin* shall not have this destructive force ; for if it be *wilful* it carries in it that which is properly the *malignity* of all sin, to wit, a resistance and opposition against God, and this is so *mortal* a Venome, that the least Dose of it is *deadly*, as a man may as certainly be poison'd by a *dram of Arsenick*, as with the *largest draught*.

THE more natural inference lies the other way, if it be but a single or petty sin, 'tis so much the easier to part with ; he that is bound with a *strong Cable*, or with a multitude of lesser Cords, may pretend some *necessity* of his Captivity from the strength of his bonds ; but he that is tied with *one slender string*, such as one resolute struggle would be sure to break : he is *prisoner* only to his own *sloth* or humour, and who will pity his *thraldom*, where 'tis so apparently his *choice* ? Do not therefore say my sin is inconsiderable and therefore I need not *relinquish* it, but my sin is inconsiderable therefore I need not *keep* it. So slight a pleasure I may part with and find no miss : this pedling profit I may resign and 'twill be no breach in my Estate. And if *Cbrist* require a renunciation of *those sins* which are as the *Hand and Eye*, shall I scruple to deposite *those* which are but as the *Hair or Nails*.

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N A Y he may yet argue higher, and from the smalness of the sin deduce the enhansment of the Guilt: great acquisitions carry some temptation in their face, but despicable prizes do rather avert than tempt. 'Twas the sign of a *common harlot* to be *hired with a Kid*, Gen. 38. and sure he must be of a strange prostitute Soul, that can adulterate for such low trivial wages. To dishonour God, though the *whole world* were to be acquir'd by it, were *great impiety*, but to do it for *handfuls of Barley and pieces of Bread*, Ezek. 13. 19. himself brands as a yet higher pitch. And sure it argues a very light esteem of God, when one poor contemptible lust shall be able to overpoize him in our hearts.

N O R is the *folly* less than the *profaneness*, when there is but one *Jonah* to be cast over-board, 'tis the greater madness to hazard a *wrack*; and let such a man pretend what he pleases in extenuation of his sin, make that appear never so minute and despicable, yet 'tis apparent all the love which other men scatter and distribute upon several, he has united and concentred in this one lust. The most *doting affection* when it is summed up can amount to no more than *this*, that it makes a man expose himself to the greatest *pain*, the greatest *loss* for the thing beloved. And this is most visible here, *Hell* is as certainly acquir'd, and *Heaven* as certainly forfeited by *one sin* as *many*; and then though there may be odds in other respects, yet what is there in this, between this more *modest* and the most *licentious* Sinner, but  
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that the *former* puts the same value upon one, that the *other* does upon many sins, and sells his Soul so much the cheaper.

AND now would God such men would review their *bargain*, soberly consider what there is in this *Idoliz'd sin* of theirs, which should exact such *costly sacrifices*. Let him whose long intimacy and experience has given him access to its most secret recesses, that has rifled its bowels, and knows the utmost whether of pleasure or profit that lies there conceal'd. Let him I say, that is thus qualified for it, make an exact inventory of its wealth, and then let him compare it with what he is to pay for it; weigh its flat and *momentary Pleasures*, with those most transcending and *perpetual Joys* which are *at Gods right hand*; its base and perishing commodities, with those unfailing treasures in the Heaven; and then judge of his purchase in respect of that part of his prize: And if that be not convincement enough, let him weigh the other also; those sad *pains* which are too *intolerable* to be suffer'd, and yet so *eternal*, that they can never cease to be suffer'd, and think whether that be not too dear a rate for that pleasure, whose gust is so little, and whose duration is less: or what *profit* he will have in the revenue of his sin, that *Gold and Silver* which will finally *eat his flesh as it were fire*, *Ja. 5. 3.* and prove the unhappy *fuel of his flames*.

FROM all these *premisses*, certainly Reason and Religion do equally infer the same *conclusion*, to wit, that men should not tolerate themselves  
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one minute in any known sin of how small a size soever it be; nor so impertinently betray their Souls to ruine for that which they call light and trivial; and is so indeed in respect of the *acquest*, but overwhelmingly ponderous in regard of the *effects* and pernicious consequents. And O that mens practices might evince them to have made this just deduction, that those who have in many things preserv'd an *innocence*, would not be so ill husbands as to forfeit all the *advantage* of that Care for want of extending it a little farther, nor suffer the whiter parts of their Soul to be discolour'd or tincted by the reflection of one crimson sin; but rather let their tears wash that into a whiteness, that they may be uniform and of a piece. For though *Jacob* clad his darling *Joseph* in a party-colour'd garment; yet God owns none either for favourite *Son*, or so much as *Servant* that he finds so arrayed. The *followers of the Lamb* are all clad in *white*, and in that attire we must be sure to put our selves if we mean to go in with him to the *marriage*. And since the Gospel is the invitation to that feast, let none imagine he has complied with it till he have thus fitted himself: till then he affronts and *baffles* his Christianity, sends it away empty without its errand; nay, which is worse *prostitutes* and *profanes* it, makes it serve only for a *Gourd*, that he may sit under the shadow of it, and commit his sins the more undisturbed; but let him remember that he is all this while breeding that *worm*, which will smite this *Gourd*, and leave him unsheltred to that scorching

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ing *wrath* of God, which will make the improvement of *Jonah's* passionate Wish, that God would take away his life, his most rational Desire; render not Death only, but Annihilation also, as eligible as it will be impossible.

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CHAP. VII.

*A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Mistakes concerning Repentance.*

**A**NOTHER dangerous Underminer of Christian Practice is the many affected mistakes in the business of *Repentance*. Men look upon that as the grand *recipe* of the Gospel, an infallible *Catholicon* against all their spiritual *maladies*; and so far they judge right, for so indeed it is. But when they proceed to compound this sovereign *Medicine* for their own use, they do it most deceitfully; leave out the principal and most operative *ingredients*: and by being such ill *Apothecaries* defame the Gospel as the *Dispensatory*, and *Christ* as the *Physician*, and likewise ruine themselves as the *Patients*. But of those who make this imperfect and Defective *composition*, all do it not alike; some leave out one part, some another, and some so many that they retain nothing of its substance and reality. Eat out all the *heart* and vertue of it, and leave only an empty *shell*, the gilding as it were of the *Pill*,  
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the Form and meer outside of Repentance.

IN this later rank I place those who suffer *repentance* to pass no farther than their Frontiers, and Outworks; assign it its quarters in the *superficies* of the man, the *Face*, or *Tongue*, or *Gesture*; but if it attempt to penetrate any deeper, if it send but one serious thought to alarm the heart, then like the *Edomites* against *Israel*, *Num.* 20. all the forces are mustered to impede its passage; such *formal* Penitents as these all ages have produc't. Christ tells of those who *disfigured their faces*, *Mat.* 6. 16. put on as it were a vizard only to act this part: and *Esay* 58. 5. long before describes them, by the *bowing down the head like a bull-rush*, and certainly the race of them is not worn out in our daies; a demure or rather a lugubrious *look*, a sad or whining *tone*, makes up, 'tis to be fear'd, the *sum* of many mens *Humiliations*. Nay as the world has of late gone, that alone were but a modest pretence: such theatrical *forms* stickle hard for the *prize*, not of that one part but of all religion: a *distorted countenance* is made the Mark of an *up-right heart*, and none is thought to speak the Language of *Canaan*, that dresses it not in an uncooth sound: and then what wonder is it that they are impatient others should *worship God*, as *David* invites, *in the beauty*, while themselves chuse to do it in the Deformity of *holiness*.

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BUT others make somewhat a fairer advance towards *repentance*, by taking in some of those things which are indeed its *necessary concomitants*; of this kind is in the first place *confession of Sin*: and this after some sort is stuck at by few; no man who hath not herded himself with the worst sort of *Fanaticks*, imagines himself sinless, or pretends to be thought so by others, but will very readily acknowledge to all the world that he is a *sinner*: and as to *men*, so especially and more solemnly to *God*. Every man that but offers at praying at all, thinks confession a necessary Branch of his devotion: all publick forms have ever carried that in the *front*, as supposing it the most principal, universal, and daily requisite to the lapsing state of humane corruption: And perhaps 'tis the general innate perswasion of this, that hath secur'd that part of our *Liturgy*, from those impertinent cavils, which have particularly aim'd at most other members of it. And I suppose this is as frequent in the *Closet* as in the *Church*: the only fear is, that there it is as loose and general too: that those private and particular guilts which are neither fit nor possible to be distinctly inserted in *publick*, do many times lose their place even in *private Confessions* also. The shortness and the ease of general forms being very likely to recommend them to those whose numerous sins threaten too great a length, and whose confus'd snarl'd consciences render it difficult, thus to pull out thread by thread: but where *Sins* are thus moulded up in a lump,



*lump*, they will like great *masses of Pills* or confections keep the more undecay'd, retain more of their *strength and vigor*. So that *such Confessions* are very indulgent to *Satans interest*, who fears not the impressions that can be made upon him, while his *body* remains entire: the great execution then beginning when 'tis broken and scatter'd, and each sin is singled out for a particular pursuit: and where that is not attempted, the war can never be successful, nor thought in earnest.

BUT suppose this be done; and by exact enumeration, each sin is parted from its fellows, as when a *conqueror* pursues the *flying troops* of routed Enemies: yet if this be all, if *quarter* be allowed, and any mercy given, no *real prize* is gain'd by this atchievement. He who recounts his sins with milder purpose towards them than utter excision, he makes no approach towards the essential part of Repentance. He may bring out large *Catalogues* of his sins, and call them *confessions*; but he may better express his own sense, if he term them rather *inventories* of his goods, for such 'tis apparent he reckons them, whilest he resolves to keep them. Indeed there is not a more absurd piece of *Pageantry*, than these *formal Confessions*, and such as shews how little, *God* is consider'd in his great Attribute *the searcher of hearts*. 'Tis certain no man would hope to atone an offended superior, by a submissive acknowledgment of his fault, did he know that his purpose of reiterating it were discern'd:

discern'd: and what a tacite *blasphemy* is it then, to treat *God* at such a rate as presumes him as *deceivable* as a poor *Mortal*; and sure this were a strange Ingredient in *repentance*. We look on it as a high pitch of impiety boastingly to avow our sins, and it deserves to be consider'd whether this kind of confessing them have not some affinity with it. Should I tell a man I have injur'd and provok'd you thus and thus, and so I resolve to do again at the next opportunity: I refer it to common construction, whether this were not to *justify*, not *retract* the unkindness. Now what I suppose thus said to man, is in the secret purpose of our heart, no less articulately spoken to God, who needs not our words to discern our meaning. Therefore whoever intends to *repeat* his sins, nay does not seriously intend to *forsake* them, does in truth maintain and defend his vicious practice, how loudly soever his Tongue accuses it. And such *clamors* are but like the feigned Quarrels of combin'd *cheats*, in order to delude some third person. But alas, the scene is here unluckily laid, for God will not be mock'd, nor will the *Mercy* promis'd to him that confesseth and *forsaketh*, ever reach him that confesseth and *retaineth*. Confession is no farther acceptable than as it either flows from, or tends to beget an abhorrence of Sin, and abstracted from those qualifications it becomes loathsome and distasteful to God. Alas, can we think our *Historical* vein so pleasant, that he shall be delighted with the *narrative* of those crimes, whose

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perpetration he detested. Can it be *Incense* in his nostrils, to have our *Dunghils* displayed? or can his pure eyes be gratified with such polluted prospects? True indeed, he gladly descends to all this as a *Physician*; nauseates not our *foulest ulcers*, when we bring them for *cure*; but when like *beggars* we make them openly our form of address, and dread nothing more than their *healing*; certainly their View will only excite his *indignation*, not his *pity*. And this, 'tis to be fear'd abodes sadly to many of us, 'tis our vulgar Objection to the *Romanist*, that they make their confessions contributive rather to their *confidence* than to their *reformation*: what their share is in that guilt, I shall not here examine, but I may too truly pronounce they have not enclos'd it, that black circle of Sin and *confess*, Confess and *sin*, encompasses as well *Protestants* as *Papists*; if possibly not quite so many, the cause 'tis doubtful is (what we need not boast) not that More of us confess *aright*, but that Fewer confess *at all*. But of those that do, if we may but cross, examine, and interrogate their *actions* against their *words*, these will soon confess (and that not *auricularly*, but in a loud and audible voice) the *invalidity* of their solemnest Confessions. When we see a man that *yesterday* kept a Humiliation, *to day* trampling on the necks, invading the possessions of his Brethren, we need no other proof how vainly and unprofitably, if not how hypocritically and provokingly, he confessed his Pride, or Covetousness; and the like

we may infer when we see any man persevere in any gross wilful sin. And of such, God knows there are such multitudes, as will give us instances more than enough, how wide a difference there is, between a *meer Confitent* & a *true Penitent*.

BUT in the next place, a *passionate regret* at Sin, a *grief* and *sadness* at its Memory, more speciously pretends to enter us into Gods roll of *Mourners*: Sorrow has (in vulgar acceptation) so engross the whole notion of repentance, that men are apt to secure themselves, that the Wind of a penitential *Sigh* is so mighty, as will blow away the guilt of the most mountainous Sin: that if they have but *wept* a little upon their crimes, they have quite *extinguish'd* the wrath they kindled: but alas these are vain dreams, God who *delights not to grieve the children of men*, does not project for our sorrow, but our innocence; and would never have invited us to the one, but as an expedient to the other. 'Tis natural even to *meer Animals* to shun that by which they have smarted, and therefore sorrow for sin is a very proper means to avert our appetite from it: but if we have learnt the unhappy skill of separating the *effect* from the *cause*, if our Grief abate not our Love; if we can cast kind looks at our sins, even through those Tears wherewith our Eyes are glas'd, this will sure be as far from accomplishing our design, as Gods: leave us equally unpardon'd, as unreform'd.

NAY alas, such Sorrows as these will rather serve to *enhance* than *Expiate* our guilts; they

they are loud witnesses against us that we know the malignity of those sins we commit; that we have pois'd them, and find them as a *talent of lead* upon our Souls, and yet prefer them before Christs *light burthen*: that we have outvied that perverse Election wherewith *Elihu* charges *Job*, and chosen *affliction* rather than *innocence*, *Job* 36. 21. and though we have felt the *gnawing of the Worm*, yet still resolve to cherish it, till it gain its woful Concomitant of *unquenchable fire*, and sure this resolvedness, this high *fortitude* in Sin, can with no reason be imagin'd a preparative to its remission, 'twill rather serve to list us among Satans *Martyrs*, than Gods *Penitents*.

AND indeed if we examine the original of this kind of Sorrow, what is there that can with any face pretend to an acceptation? alas, 'tis apparent there is no dislike to the sin; for the natural effect of that, would be the abandoning it. If I have fallen into the mire, common reason directs me, not to sit down and cry that I am so defiled; but to cleanse and wash my self, and beware of such another misadventure. Now Gods enmity is purely with the sin: and if we think to contract a league with him; we must espouse his quarrel, hate what he hates: But in this case 'tis quite otherwise, we dislike only the *consequence*, not the *crime*; are dissatisfied to see that what is so pleasant, will not be safe: detest those temporal or eternal miseries, which God has annex to it: which is upon the matter to grieve, not because

we are *guilty*, but God is *just*; and to avert only that part of the *evil*, of which he owns to be the author, that of *Punishment*: whilst that of *Sin*, as our own creature we dandle and caress. And can we think it sufficient to atone an incensed Majesty, that we love our own ease, while yet we love our sin so much better? is it a *virtue* to have some ineffective regrets to damnation, and such a *Virtue* too, as shall serve to ballance all our vices? this were indeed a compendious course to block up Hell gates, and leave none a possibility of ever getting thither, but those who scaled the wall and desperately resolved to possess themselves of that place of *Torment*. But alas, they are other *fruits* of Repentance that must deliver us from the *wrath* to come: for though I deny not, that the *apprehension* of Danger, is extremely both reasonable and useful, yet 'tis only by way of *preparative*: 'tis like the *Trumpet* that gives the *Alarm*, and sets us to the *battail*, but it must not pretend to be like those of *Gideon* that achiev'd the whole victory. To see our *danger*, may occasion, but does not cause, or necessarily infer an *escape*. I may madly leap into that pit which I see gaping to swallow me, and then my *fore-sight* serves only to render me my own *murderer*. In short, if that formidable aspect of our Sins, make us run from them, it has done us the happiest office; *pluckt us as S. Jude says, out of the fire*: but if our love be so doting, as to counter-charm our fear; if we be so bewitcht with the *deceitfulness of sin*, that we  
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will have its Embraces, though we know them *deadly*; if we weep that we have sinn'd, and yet go on to sin; our wilful *Guilt* will defile our *Tears*, but our tears will never cleanse our guilt. We only assist in the judicature against our selves; and to Gods condemnation add our own: and what we call our Penitence, becomes a sad Attestation of our Incurribleness.

A N D as this *meer Sorrow* will never avail, so neither will a *partial* and *imperfect reformation*, and that whether it be defective in respect of the *kind*, or of the *Duration*: to the former we have spoken elsewhere, and shall not need to repeat: but of the later there will need no less caution; men being apt to obtrude fallacies on themselves in this as much as in the other. Every transient *gleam* of Piety is concluded to be that *flame* in which the Holy Ghost descended, and though it want the main circumstance of resting on them, yet serves to personate the Comforter. He that whilst the soreness of his late pangs of *conscience* remains, finds himself a little indispos'd for a new carier in sin, presently concludes *repentance* hath had its perfect work in him, made that *change* and transmutation, which certainly denominates him a *new creature*, and pronounces his *vicious appetites extinct* and *mortified*: when alas they are but strew'd over with a little *penitential Ashes*, and will as soon as they meet with *combustible matter*, any apt temptation, *flame out* as fierce as ever, and God knows the event does too often actually attest this after all



the ablutions, and purification of their repentance, their next work is to divest themselves of their white robe, and those whom yesterday you saw in the *laver*, to day you shall find wallowing in the *mire*: and as with far the more *guilt*, so sometimes with much the greater *confidence*, for having been so washt: yet so strongly are some mens phancies possess'd with their imaginary purity, that they are the last that take notice how the scene is chang'd: they comfort themselves, that sin and they have had some little *skirmishes*, though but preparatory to a closer *league*; that they had fixt good purposes, though there remain nothing visible but their violation; and so will call themselves Christs *Sheep*, though their notorious impurities witness them to belong only to that *herd* into which the *Legion* entered.

THIS is a deceit which one would think should immediately detect its self, but 'tis strange to see, how our *wishes* can prescribe to our *faith*; and what a more than omnipotent power our self-love has in reconciling contradictions: yet I can scarce think this innate strength of corruption had been sufficient for the purpose, had it not had the auxiliary aid of some commodious doctrines. My present design is so far from controversial, that I am loth to point out any to which I must express unkindness: yet upon this occasion, I shall refer it to consideration, whether that method which has been us'd to quiet *some* Consciences, be not very apt to stupifie *more*. When I see

see one who from his present reigning sins, regularly infers the illness of his state; that is yet by his Casuist, diverted from that prospect, and bid look back to see, whether no part of his life afforded any Evidence of true Grace, and if he can but remember any such time; is warranted to make that his *Epocha*, from whence to date his *infallible assurance*; is told that that *immortal seed*, though it may be covered, yet cannot be choaked; but will most certainly spring up unto *Eternal life*: When I say I see this easie remedy prescrib'd to his fears, 'twill be obvious for me to compound my self an *Antidote* from the same *Ingredients*: To fix my Eye upon some *mark* of Regeneration which at some time or other, I either have, or phancied to have had upon me, and with the stedfast beholding of that, as of the *brazen Serpent* be fortified against all the *venome of my fiery lusts*. Cast in this one stick, and with it sweeten all the waters of *Marah*, secure me against all the bitter effects of my present guilts. How fatal an influence such discourfings as these are apt to have on practice, is too obvious both in the cause, and effect: I need not examine the authority of that grand Principle on which they are founded; since if that were admitted, yet it will not justify the before mention'd Superstructure: for suppose it receiv'd as an infallible truth, that grace if true can never be lost: yet 'tis, by the confession of all, so easie to be deceiv'd in judging what is so, and our partialities to our selves are so likely to betray us to that deceit; that these *Corallaries*

men deduce thence for their personal assurance, can never partake of the suppos'd infallibility of those premises they derive from, and consequently are much too slight a *basis* for men to trust with so great a *weight*, as is that of their *present comfort* and *future state*.

SEVERAL other pernicious errors there are in the matter of *Repentance* which men fall into, shall I say, or rather aspire to; make it their ambition to be under their covert and patronage, and with extreme Violence to their *reason* as well as *religion*, climb up to those castles in the air, and there fortifie themselves impreguably against all the sacred Artillery of Divine threats. Their *false confidences* serve them as *feather-beds*, not only to sleep securely in, but to *dead all bullets* that are shot against them. But of all those deceitful *refuges*, there is none more treacherous, & yet more confidently and universally resorted to, than that of a *Repentance in reversion*, to commence no body knows when, some moneths or years hence, when this business is dispatcht, that lust satiated; or indeed to bear the same date (if not a later) with their last Will and Testament. This is that unhappy retreat to which *thousands fly* as the routed *Syrians* to *Aphek*, 1 *Kings* 20. 30. till they are entomb'd in that *wall*, whose shelter they solicited: How desperate the hazard of such procrastination is, hath been so convincingly demonstrated by better Pens; that *trumpet* hath been blowed so loud by all our spiritual *watchmen*, that there remains nothing seasonable, but to wonder whence  
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men have got that *Lethe* which secures them their sleep in spite of that *Alarm*: and certainly 'tis matter of the greatest astonishment to observe the stupid, yet common boldness of men, who so fearlessly expose themselves to this most formidable of perils; who yet in things of far less danger and lighter consequence are so nicely timorous, that no security is thought enough, every the remotest danger to their outward concerns, excites their present vigilance to avert it: but here that order is most absurdly inverted, and the present eminent danger is assign'd and put off to their future care. Let the *Physician* tell them he observes some Symptomes of a latent *Malady*, some aptitudes or first Causes of a *Disease*; what hast is there made to meet that Enemy in the frontiers, before it advance too far? All Arts of prevention are us'd, and such uneasie remedies submitted to, as perhaps out-bid the pain of the Disease. In like manner let a *Lawyer* tell them he has spied some defect in an *entail*, which may perhaps in the next age give some interruption to their design of having their houses endure for ever, *Psal.* 47. how solicitous are they to repair that error, and leave nothing to the mercy of a *Law-quirk*? And in both cases thank the vigilant care of their informer that gave them notice of their danger: but let the *Divine* tell them he sees their Souls languishing under the most mortal diseases; that they have actually forfeited their inheritance in the land of the living, they can hear it unconcernedly; say, or at least think those cares are to be

be remitted to *Felix* his more convenient season, that when their *Bodies* are as infirm as their *Souls*, then care may be taken for both together. That 'tis enough for their *spiritual* Life to commence when the *natural* is expiring, and then to provide for *everlasting* Habitations, when they are putting off their *Earthly* Tabernacle: as for the thanks they give their *Monitor*, 'tis generally the same that *St. Paul* received from the *Galatians*, to count him their *enemy* for telling them the truth, *Gal. 4. 16.* but alas he has no reason to resent the injury, since 'tis but the same they offer to their nearest and most intimate friend, that *Angel guardian* which God and Nature has placed within their own breasts, I mean their *Conscience*: let that at any time whisper the same admonition, and immediately they cry out as *Ahab* to *Elijah*, *Hast thou found me O my Enemy.* All arts are us'd to convey themselves out of its Reach, Business, or Company, or Drink, or any thing is solicited to come in to their rescue, that in that throng they may deceive its pursuit, or at least in that louder noise drown its voice; and is not this to look on it as their *Enemy*, while they shun it as a *Malefactor* does the *Officer*. Yet I appeal to the breasts of those, who lean upon the broken reed of a late *Repentance*, whether this be not the case with them: let them tell me whether they dare trust themselves alone with their *Conscience*, give it opportunity of speaking freely to them, of laying before them the mad adventure they make of their precious *Souls*; which they do not only expose

expose to as many hazards of a *swift damnation*, as there are accidents which may surprize their *bodies with a sudden death*; but do besides by this resistance repel and quench that *Spirit*, without which they can never hope to effect that so necessary, so difficult a *work*; nay, I may, I fear, ask some of them whether they have not so often shunned these parleys, that their *Consciences* like an *abus'd Friend*, has at last given them over, ceas'd to pursue them with more of those unwelcome importunities; and by its silence left them secur'd from all noise which may disturb that treacherous sleep into which they have lulled themselves. To those who are thus given up to the *spirit of slumber*, I cannot hope to speak loud enough to rouse them; but to those that are but of the former rank, that have not yet so prosper'd in their unkind design against themselves, as quite to have alienated their bosom friend, that are yet within the reach of those *amica verbera*, the stripes and reproofs of their own *Conscience*; to such I would address with this most affectionate *pétition*, that they would not seek to remove themselves from that *wholsome discipline*; that they would not fly that *Chyrurgion* whose *Lancet* threatens none but the *imposthumated parts*; but rather chuse to be shewed the formidableness of their Danger, than by a blind embracing it, to perish in it. And if they have but any general confus'd inclinations to this so reasonable a request, I shall then put on more solemnity, assume to come as an *Envoy* from those dreaded *Consciences* of theirs,

theirs, to *mediate* an interview, to propose the fixing some time of parley, and bespeak their *patience* to hear it out: And let them but grant this, let them but dare to do so much in order to their own safety, and I can scarce think it possible they should after retain that daring, which only tends to their ruine. In a word, let men seriously and attentively listen to that *voice* within them, and they will certainly need no other *medium*, to convince them either of the error or danger of thus procrastinating their *Repentance*, which themselves acknowledge must not upon their utmost peril be finally omitted, and yet nothing but an immediate dispatch can secure it shall not.

'TWILL be needless to descend to a particular view of more of these deceits, they will easily be detected by this one *general Rule*, that whatsoever falls short of a present, universal, permanent Change, falls as much short of *Repentance*. All the pretences that are made upon any other score are but the Garments of the *elder brother* put upon the back of the *younger*, which though they might delude a blind *Isaac*, will never be able to deceive an all-seeing *God*. All that remains is to offer to the Readers consideration, how nearly he is concern'd to guard himself against all delusions in this so important an affair. It was an ancient *Stratagem* of War to poison the waters in an Enemies Camp, that so they may drink their own deaths: but *Satan* has here far out-vied that *Policy*. Were but our Nourishment infected, we had still a recourse left us to Medicine, but  
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here he has envonom'd our very Physick, and what cure remains for those whose very remedies are their *disease*: when that Bath which was design'd to cleanse us, is its self polluted, we may well cry out as *Dyonisius* of the corrupted River of *Alexandria*, ποῖον ὕδωρ ἀνὰ πάντα καθάριστος ὕδατος ὕδαρ ἄλλο καθάριστον, what Flood shall cleanse these Waters? Where can we be secure, when our *Repentance* (which the Apostle, 2 Tim. 2. 26. supposes the Means of disentangling us) is its self become our Snare. This as it loudly proclaims our danger, so surely in all reason it should awake our care, teach us not to suffer our selves to be abus'd with delusive appearances and shadows of *Repentance*, lest we finally find that *Ixion-like* we have embrac'd a Cloud. What an amazing defeat will it be to him, who presumes his Tears have blotted out the *hand-writing* against him; to find the full Bill brought in at the great Assize, and those he call'd his *penitential sorrows* here, to prove but the Prologue to that *Tragedy* which ends in *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. And therefore let every one timely provide against that fatal surprize, use this excellent receipt, not as a *Cosmetick* only to beautifie the face, give him some fair appearance to himself, but as *Medicine* to restore health; reduce him to such an *Athle-tick* vigorous Habit, as may evidence its self in all *vital* Actions, which will prove the best evidences in our last trial, where the inquisition will not be so much upon our Mouths or Eyes, as upon our Hands: not how many *confessions* we have made,

made, or how many *tears* shed, but what *acts* of Vertue we have substituted in the room of our Vices: whether we have broke off our Sins by *righteousness*, and our Iniquities by *shewing mercy to the Poor*, and without this 'tis infallibly certain, our Christianity will be as ineffectual to our *Bliss*, as it is to our *Piety*: if we will not permit it here to bring us to the *obedience* of Servants, it shall never instate us hereafter in the *inheritance* of Sons.

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## CHAP. VIII.

*A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Mistakes concerning Almighty God, and the methods of his Providence.*

**T**O these Mistakes of our selves and interests, we have added others also concerning God, which are no less destructive to Christian Practice, for as the *right knowledge of God is by our Saviour, Jo. 17. 3.* put as the Epitome and summe of all that leads to *bliss*, so our misprisions and misapprehensions of him, are no less remarkable for the contrary effects; nor can we suppose it otherwise, when we remember that this is the grand work and *basis* of all Religion, and therefore if this *foundation* be deceitfully laid, the *superstructure* must necessarily sink and perish: and in this sense 'tis possible for us at once to build on the *Rock* and the *Sand* too, we may fix  
our

our faith intentionally on God, and yet by absurd notions and unwarranted conceits of him, defeat in the particulars what we establish in the gross: represent him so utterly distant from what he is, that under that disguise he will not much appear, either an Encourager or Rewarder of our *Piety*, and then we may guess how 'tis like to flourish, since the Apostle gives it as a *Fundamental Axiome*, Heb. 12. 6. *That he who comes to God must believe that he is a rewarder of them which diligently seek him.*

OF these Mistakes concerning God, there are divers; many more than the design'd brevity of this discourse will admit me to examine. I shall only mention *three*, those are, First, concerning his *Decrees*, Secondly, his *Attributes*, Thirdly, his *Providence*.

BY his *Decrees*, I mean not those standing rules which he has in his Word set forth as the measures by which he will distribute rewards and punishments; but those secret purposes of his Will, which he neither commands us to search after, nor will permit us to know. That there are many Mistakes concerning these, the numberless Disputes that have been rais'd about them will sufficiently attest, it being impossible for two Contradictory Opinions to be both *true*, though in things of this abstruse nature 'tis very possible both may be *false*. 'Tis not my purpose to wade into those bottomless controversies, which like a Gulph have swallowed up so much time and industry of learned men: I shall only in *general* commend

commend it to the Readers consideration, whether it be probable or indeed possible for those Opinions to be *true* which infer *falsehood* in God: And then let the second enquiry be, whether that be not too evidently the result of those discourses, which set an Opposition between his *revealed* and his *secret* Will, his Commands and his Decrees, making the one a blind for the better execution of the other, as if all the Transportation and Zeal he expresses for us, all the passionate enamoring invitations he makes to us, were only to sport himself with our credulity: like the divertisement of those Men, who court them for Wives, whom they would abhor to marry: nay, as if all the protestations and most solemn oaths of God, were design'd but to advance the delusion, and raise expectations meerly to defeat them. This is such a severe sort of *Irony*, as we would all think not only unkind but unjust in a man; and 'tis not possible that God, who appeals to us concerning the equality of his ways, should fall short of the strictest measures among us, or exemplifie to us an unsincerity he forbids us to follow.

HOW very inauspicious influence such *doctrines* are apt to have on *practice* is too visible, for since 'tis as well the instinct as duty of our nature to aspire to an assimilation with God, even that most laudable and generous ambition shall by this means become our snare; for when God shall be thus misrepresented to us, drawn out by the black Lines, not only of *severity*, but *deceit*, rendred a Falsifier of his *Word*, nay *Oath*; 'twill give

give not only temptation but warrant to the like Practices: we shall easily swallow up all the particular commands of God, in that fundamental one of being like him; as we are taught himself has done both his commands and promises in his hidden Decrees. This is so natural a piece of *Logic*, that 'tis very unsafe men should be trusted with those *premises* whence 'tis deriv'd. And though we are not over apt to transcribe that Copy God does really set us, yet this spurious one will not miss to be taken out: that pravity of our nature which hinders in the one, exciting and spurring us on in the other. This is a way to reconcile our Vices with our reputation, and *fin cum Privilegio*; and there is little doubt of mens aptness to use that advantage, we see it in lower instances. The *Vices* of a Prince draw shoals of followers, when his *virtue* leaves him the more eminent, because single, and renders him rather revered than imitated: And certainly 'twas none of the Devils slightest *stratagems* on the *Gentile* world, to give them *such Gods* as might exemplifie to them all those *odious crimes*, wherein he desir'd to immerse them. Whether this may not be a *branch* of the same Illusion, I wish the Propugners of this doctrine would seriously consider.

AND as several *ills* are hereby countenanc'd and authoriz'd, so is all *virtue* in general discouraged and disheartned; this benumbs us in our Christian course, substracts that spirit and vigour, which should carry us through the weary stages of duty: indeed it cuts the very *sinews* of  
M      Industry,

Industry, baffles and makes ridiculous all *purposes* of Labour; for what should invite a man to strive for that, from which he knows he is either irreversibly precluded, or else so infallibly ascertain'd, that his negligence cannot defeat him. These are such *extremes* as afford no *middle*, wherein the vertue of industry may exist, hope being equally out-dated by the desperateness or unneccessariness of an undertaking: and how necessary hope is to excite endeavour we may learn of *St. Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 5. where he presses his *Corinthians* to the constancy of Christian Practice upon this ground, that their *labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*. But according to some mens doctrine, 'tis scarce possible for a man to know whether his labour be in vain or no; since the effect of it depends not upon the revealed *promise* but secret *purpose* of God, and who knows whether there may not lie some *dormant Decrees* against him, which when he thinks he has run his *race* shall yet defeat him of his *Crown*. Whether a reward thus stated will much animate mens diligence, I may leave every man to judge by the like circumstances in their *secular* concerns; and if they find they would there damp their courage, dispirit and dishearten them from attempting, there will be sure more reason to conclude it in these *spiritual* Affairs, wherein our industry is commonly much less indefatigable.

BUT I shall not farther insist on the ill consequences of particular mistakes; there is one *fundamental error*, which if it could be cured, would supersede

superfede all the rest, I mean our bold Folly in meddling with Gods Decrees, which we call hidden, and yet ridiculously confute that Epithet by pretending to know them. This is so much an insolence as forfeits the comparifon, which might belong to it as an error; we see *secular States* jealously reserve their *private Councils*, and shall we think God so scrutible, or our selves so penetrating, that none of his secrets can escape us: or if we think him, as indeed he is, *unfathomable*, why do we thus madly attempt what we confess *impossible*; especially since we shall not only lose the thing we so vainly pursue, but others which we might else enjoy. 'Tis as if a man should be so transported with a busie earnestness of knowing his Princes *Secrets*, as quite to forget his *Laws*, and incur capital punishment. God has given us *rules of life*, which upon the severest penalties he requires us to study and practice; and we divert from these, and make it our business to trace his *Counsels*. We are gazing at the *Stars* to read our destiny, and look not to our *feet*; and by that negligence experiment the worst fate they could have portended: for I think we may say our wild *Phancies* about Gods Decrees, have in event reprobated more than those *Decrees* upon which they are so willing to charge their ruine, and have bid fair to the damning of many, whom those left salvable. And indeed 'tis to be expected from Divine Justice, that such bold Inquisitors should find nothing but their own Destruction. That Ark which devoutly revered brought *bles-*



sings, when curiously pried into diffus'd *Pestilence* and *Death*, 1 *Sam.* 6. 19. Nay the very *Poets* will tell us, that if we will have *Prometheus* his Fire, we must take *Pandora's Box* also: and sure Industry cannot be worse laid out than thus to fetch home *Plagues*, and while so much of it runs waste to such unhappy purposes, 'tis no wonder if we want for better; forget our *calling* by contemplating our *predestination*; and let the Opinion of our *fate* be at once the Encouragement and Excuse of our *sloth*, than which nothing can more evacuate the purpose and design of our Christianity, which Divines have truly defin'd to be not a *contemplative* but *active* Science.

TO the same unhappy Effect concur our Mistakes of *Gods Attributes*, if I may call them Mistakes, which seem to be rather wilful Nescience, they being so delineated to us both in his Word and his Providences, that 'tis not want of light, but winking against it that must leave us ignorant. What the *speculative errors* are in this matter concerns not my present design to examine: but there seem to be some Misperfwasions concerning the *Divine Attributes*, which do remarkably tend in their consequence and effect, to the corrupting *mens manners*; nay, look as if they were design'd, and affectedly chosen for that purpose; I mean especially those concerning his *Justice* and *Mercy*, which being the *Attributes* in which we have the most immediate Concern, the Errors in them are the more noxious and destructive. Of this sort is that narrow scanty notion

too many have of *Gods Justice*, which we measure not by *him* but *our selves*, and therefore proportion it not according to his *infinity*, but our own *concerns*. That is an Attribute from which we promise to our selves no advantage, and therefore we are willing to contract and shrink it up, make it serve only as a *Cypher* to advance *mercy*, but are unwilling to understand it in its proper Extent; think it a *word of form* put in to compleat the greatness of *Gods Stile*, rather than any *intrinsic part of his nature*, which he must deny himself to put off.

THUS do we sacrilegiously steal from God a part of his being, and while other Sacrileges invade only his *patrimony*, this commits a riot upon his very *nature*, yet as if we meant the Proverb should indemnifie us, and *Exchange* extinguish the *Robbery*, we add to another attribute what we have default from this, and amplify and extend his *Mercy*, as much as we confine and limit his *Justice*; that is the one infinite Ocean, wherein not only we, but himself must be swallowed up. We will think of him under no other notion, nor allow him to be any other thing, but what shall be in subserviency to this: we will have him Powerful to *relieve* our Distresses, but not to *revenge* our Crimes; Wise to *defeat* the machinations of our Enemies, but not to *circumvent* our own indirect or impious Policies; All-seeing to *behold* our Wants and Grievs, but not to *discern* our closer Guilts; True to *perform* his Promises, but not his Threats. In short, we

model all that is in God to our own wishes; and instead of believing him what he is, phancy him what we would have him. Like *Micha*, Jud. 17. 5. *making us a God* for our own peculiar use, and forming the Deity we mean to worship. A strange bold Inversion, for Creatures thus to fashion their Creator, put their own stamp and impress upon him, and shape him to their Phancies. And indeed 'tis nothing but *Phancy* that has to do in this Attempt, and accordingly it must vanish as the *operations* of that illusive Faculty use to do. We may represent God to our selves as we please, but that has no more real *influence* on him, than a *deforming Optick-glass* has on the *Object* it disguises, he is still *the same* amidst all our wilde conceits of him, and will alwaies make good the *title*, by which he deliver'd himself to *Moses*, Ex. 3. 14. *I am that I am*. All that is in him is equally immense and infinite, his *mercy* need not invade his *justice* to gain its self a larger field of action, which is already (as the *Psalmist* speaks) *over all his works*; neither his *justice* encroach upon his *mercy*, that having also a Province wide enough; all impenitent sinners being within its Verge, and God knows how much soever we streighten it in our *opinions*, we do indeed too much extend it in its *real force*, by rendring our selves the proper objects of it. In short, God who is the author of *order* and peace, cannot be suppos'd to be in *confusion* within himself; the divine Attributes are not in *strife*, but perfect *harmony*; 'tis we only that have rais'd this more than  
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than *Gygantick war*, not only *against* Heaven, but in it. The several *Luminaries* pursue the regular motions of the *Spheres*; but we confound at once the *Laws* of their Creation, and their *Author* too, strive to eclipse and darken *the father of light*. But if the removing of an earthly Land-mark be a crime punishable both by God and man, what Thunder-bolts belong to those who thus attempt to set new Boundaries in heaven, to limit and measure out even the *divine Nature* by the proportions of their own *Phancies*, and indeed such temerity as this, is too like to confute its self, and feel that Justice it will not believe: yet as great and daring a crime as it is, I fear there are few that can totally acquit themselves of it: for though all <sup>dis</sup>avow it, yet he that shall narrowly search his own heart, will scarce find it clear from all degrees of it: We are all apt to cherish a *flattering hope*, that God is not so severe as he is represented, or that if in respect of his Justice he be a *consuming fire*, yet that Mercy will be sure to snatch us out of the *burning*; like the Angels to *Lot*, assist our Escapes, and provide us a *Zoar*, that our souls may live: and this Hope though founded only in our *wishes*, is very apt to slide into our *faith*, and make us believe what we would have: by which means this becomes a kind of *Epidemick* Heresie, the most frequent and common mispersuasion that occurs concerning the divine Attributes.

IT would be a work more long than useful to recite the several errors that have sprung from

this one. That of *Origen*, that *the Devils should finally be saved*, is a noted and pregnant Instance, which could be deriv'd from nothing but this unequal apprehension of Gods Justice and Mercy: And besides all other ancient, we have many branches of a later growth, that spring from the same root, a set of plausible falsities, which would quench the *unquenchable Fire*, and kill the never *dying Worm*; I mean those allaying softning descriptions some of this age have made of Hell, some changing the *kind*, others abating the *intensity*, or at least the *duration* of those Torments, each subtracting so much from this *Tophet*, that they have left *Atheism* an easie task to take away the rest: and may give suspicion they mean to visit that place, which they are so industrious to make easie.

BUT whatever they do *themselves*, 'tis sure this is the way to send *others* thither, to take off their fears of it, to make them think it not so dreadful a place as they once suppos'd, and consequently less careful to decline the ways that lead to it. 'Tis indeed too obvious that such persuasions do mightily impugn Christian practice, and embolden men in sin: and God knows we need no such encouragement; the more general fallacious hopes of Mercy being too sufficient for that purpose without these supernumerary deceits: but between the one and the other, *Libertinism* is like to outgrow all restraints, and the Opinion of Gods *goodness* instead of leading men to *repentance*, will slacken those reigns where-  
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with our brutish Nature should be bridled and restrain'd, and we thus left unto the sway of lust and passion, must run headlong upon ruine, *as the Horse rusheth into the Battel*. For alas, we are not so *generous* as to do well for Vertues sake, nay nor so *provident* as to do it for Reward, 'tis our fear that is the most prevalent incentive, and accordingly we find religion generally makes her first impressions there. They are *the terrors of the Lord* that do most usually, and most effectually *perswade men*, 2 Cor. 5. 11. our Hearts must be pricked, and at those Orifices piety enters. Now when all these terrors shall be superseded by the opinion of an overwhelming mercy, when *Hell* shall either be annihilated, or suppos'd so to annihilate us, that we shall lose our passiveness with our being, and be as incapable of suffering, as even *Heaven* its self can make us, what will be left to engage us to *virtue*, or deter us from *vice*: Alas, do we not often see a daring Lust bid *battel* to all the artillery of Heaven, meet God in his loudest Thunder, and venture on *damnation* in its dreadfulest form? and can we think it will be more modest, when it shall be told that they are only edgeless weapons it hath to encounter? that Gods Thunder amidst all its noise carries no *bolt*? and that the Flames of the bottomless pit, are but a *painted fire*, that at a distance may fright but not hurt us, or at least so hurt us, that we shall not feel it? When those rubs which fear interpos'd are thus removed, there is nothing to stay the course of headlong riot, but pre-

precipitiously it will on, where ever *strong desire* shall drive, or *flattering lust* allure: he that loved his sin, even when it threatned him *ruine*, serv'd it assiduouſly, when it promised no other wages than *death*, Rom. 6. 23. how will he hug this *viper* when he thinks 'tis stingless, and give up his ear to be bored by that *Master*, which affords him present pleasures without future stripes: we see even in Civil matters the *presumption* of Impunity is the great *nurse* of Disorders, and if it were not for the *coercive* power of Laws we should soon see how little the *directive* would signify; and doubtless 'tis the same in spiritual or rather worse, by how much we are more bent upon the breaking of Gods Laws than mens, and consequently will be the more apprehensive of any Encouragement.

OF the truth hereof our experience gives too sad proof, none rushing so boldly upon Gods *justice*, as those who have most fortified themselves against the *dread* of it, as if they meant their *practice* should experiment the truth of their *speculation*, and make the utmost trial whether God can be provoked or no. Indeed men use *mercy* as amaz'd Passengers sometimes do a *plank* in a shipwrack, lay so much weight upon it, as sinks both it and themselves; so perishing by too great a confidence of their rescue, and finding a *Gulph* where they expected an *Ark*: not that I suppose Mercy unable to support the weight of all the *Persons*, nay, and of all the *sins* in the world, which have not the one ponderous *adherent* of Impenitence superadded; but that  
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that is a burthen which even the divine *Clemency* sinks under, refuses to plead such a cause, and refers it to *Justice* as its proper Court: And therefore to sin on, in hope of mercy, is to undermine our selves, and commit a folly as absurd as ruinous, I wish I could say 'twere not also as frequent: but God knows, 'tis every where too apparent; men openly avow it, so that 'tis become the vulgar Answer to every convicting Reproof, that *God is merciful*: And surely they that observe the growth of vice, since our new descriptions of Hell came abroad, will have cause to think the one has had no small influence on the other, and that while some have made it borrow the uneasiness of our humane state to make up its torments; they have taken care it should be just, and lend us back sins of a greater magnitude: This miserable traffic have these Factors settled, between the present world and the infernal region, that Hell should have Earths *pains*, and Earth Hells *wickedness*; the later alas we are too fully possess'd of, which is like to send too many souls to discover the deceit of the other. In fine, our groundless confidences of mercy, and those other *Chimera's* we forge out of that, are certainly the most frequent and dangerous underminers of Christian practice: these like the *Sun* give heat and vigor to those inordinate lusts, which a just *fear of vengeance* would as a winters frost nip, and destroy: And till we lay by these easie slight thoughts of God, and consider him in those more awful attributes which exact our reverence, his *mercy* will only

only serve to ripen us for his judgment, that smooth and gentle property in God, which to all who abuse it not is indeed the *oil of gladness*, will thus perverted acquire the more fatal quality of Oil, serve only to intend our *flames*, and remove us as far from the *rewards* of Piety, as our bold *phancies* have done from the *practice*.

A third sort of mistakes there are by which Piety is obstructed, and those are such as concern *Gods providence*, about which the world has long since had many disputes; some entirely denying it, as presuming God so wholly taken up with the contemplation and enjoyment of his own felicity, that he was utterly inconsiderate of that of his creatures, and an unconcern'd *spectator* of humane affairs; others limiting and restraining it to those things only which themselves were pleas'd to think worthy of the divine inspection and conduct: But these questions have been more bandied among *Philosophers* than *Christians*, and therefore are beyond our present enquiry. Yet give me leave by the way to express my fears, that these errors have yet some secret rooting in too many hearts; that there are many who rather formally *say*, then cordially *believe*, that God governs the World, and disposes as well of *humane* as *divine* things; a suspicion that is rendred too probable by those indirect arts men use, to possess themselves of secular advantages; for did they seriously think that all those things are in Gods hands, from whence they are neither strong nor cunning enough, either to wrest or pilfer them,

them, 'tis scarce imaginable they should attempt such painful impossibilities, disquiet themselves in vain as the *Psalmist* speaks, and which is worse, forfeit all title to them as Gods gifts, by thus assuming to make them their own. But this is a disquisition I must leave every man to make in his own heart; only let me say, that he that has there any doubt of Gods universal or particular providence, has also in it the root of all *unchristian Sins*, of Distrust, Solicitude, and Fraud: there being nothing that can effectually supersede our own carkings and contrivances for our selves, but the assurance that God cares for us. Men being still apt to scramble, where there is none from whom they expect an orderly and sufficient distribution, and therefore this error where ever it is found, may well be reckon'd among the impeters of Christian duty.

BUT besides those who thus doubt of Providence, there are others liable to great mistakes, I mean those who to their *just belief* of Gods Providence, superadd a *groundless confidence* of their own skill in fathoming it, that are not content to know it in its *product* and event, but pretend to discern it in its most secret *designments* and purposes; and do not so much *revere* Gods dispensations, as *interpret* them: I do not here mean to condemn all *particular applications* of providential Events, which are sometimes so extraordinary and remarkable, that they are their own *expositors*, and point out the *construction* we are to make: and an humble advertence unto  
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such, is not only innocent but necessary: but when men shall attempt to read every line in *Gods hand*, to make their own inference from every efflux of Providence; these pretenders to *divine Palmistry*, seem to differ only thus much from those who make a trade of the *natural*, that they Cheat *themselves* as well as *others*.

YET there want not some who have gone yet farther, and think not only to *understand* Providence, but *assist* it: not only trace it in all its intricate windings, and concealed *intendments*, but help it in the execution, and give birth to its *conceptions*: Of this sort especially are those, who having possess'd their brains with some conjectural explications of obscure prophecies, will administer to providence, and call out those events they expect: and as if they were conscious that God would not make good their dreams, endeavour to do it themselves. This Age has afforded too many instances of this, when the *fulfilling of Prophecies* has by some been made the solemn summons to *rebellion and blood*: and in order to the *hating and destroying the whore*, Rev. 17. 1. Men have been animated to hate and destroy all who were not infected with their own Phrensie. This we know has been call'd the *helping of the Lord against the mighty*, and something more than votive Curses awarded to those who refus'd to assist. Thus have they first wildly mistaken, and then no less wildly out-run Gods designs: as if like *Baal*, *Jud. 6*. he were unable to plead for himself, to  
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vindicate his own cause, or effect his purposes without their help: and having resolved what he shall do, obtrude themselves upon him as his instruments; how repugnant such *anticipations* of Providence are to the *interests* of Christianity is too apparent from the many *detestable effects* they have produc'd.

BUT setting aside these, let us return to those we spake of before; who presuming to expound providential Events, make them the *Criterion* by which to judge both of *persons* and of *causes*, concluding the one loved or hated, the other approved or disallowed by God, according to their *prosperous* or *adverse* Success. The first of these was by our Saviour exploded, as an undue way of process in the *Jews*, in the case of the *Galileans*, and before him *Solomon* had given it as a Maxim, that *no man could know love or hatred by all that is before him*: Eccl. 9. 2. And if under the *Jewish Oeconomy*, where temporal Blessings made up so great a part of their Promises, it was so; much more is it under the *Gospel*, whose frame and composure is quite distant; which instead of proposing secular prosperities to its *profelytes*, assures them the contrary; sets up the Cross as the Standard under which they are to fight, and affords no temporal Hopes but with an allaying *proviso* of Persecutions and Afflictions; nay, the Apostle to the *Hebrews* goes farther, makes them not only *incident* but *necessary* to Christians, the badge and cognizance of Sonship, whilest the *no chastening* is the fatallest Sign, *a token of bastardy*  
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and abdication, *Heb. 12. 7, 8.* And doubtless the experience of every Christian asserts the doctrine; we are all apt with the *Prodigal* to forsake our fathers house, and as long as we can have the riot and not the wants, shall never think of returning; we must be famisht into consideration, and our *bushes* alone will send us home to the *fatted Galf*. And can there be a greater indulgence in God, than thus to make our Iniquity our Punishment, that it may not be our Ruine; to embitter those sensualities whose lasciviousness serves to intoxicate us, and to clip those wings which he sees carry us from him. Stories tell us that the *Trojan Wives* after the *destruction* of their Country, being wearied with their restless vagrant life, necessitated their Husbands to a *settlement* by *burning* their Ships. And the same kind stratagem God has upon us: he sees that our worldly accessions do rather enlarge than fill our appetites, and carry us on to farther pursuits, and by drawing us still more from him the Center of rest, exposes us to endless wandrings, and then what can be kinder than to rescue us from such a condition, that *Curse of Cain*, to be a *fugitive*, and a *vagabond in the earth*, to deprive us of our treacherous prosperities, and fire those Ships wherein we are preparing like *Jonah*, to *fly from the presence of the Lord*: so by a happy necessity forcing us to fix our selves on him. And this is the worst God designs us in every adversity: and did we mean but as well to our selves, we should not miss of receiving the happiest Effects, even that

that *peaceable fruit of righteousness* the Apostle speaks of, *Heb. 12.* This holy men so well understood, that we find them dread nothing so much as an uninterrupted prosperity; they like the *Muscovite Women*, grew jealous of Gods love when he forbore to strike, upon which score it is, that in the Ancient Fathers, there are so many solemn petitions for stripes; such importunate solicitations for those *medicinal corrections*, where-in they judg'd both Gods *kindness* and their own *safety* to consist.

AND then how perverse, how preposterous are our measures, when we conclude quite the other way, estimate Gods love only from *outward successes*, and think he is never angry but when he smites: a Perswasion, which as it is very false in its *grounds*, so very pernicious in its *effects*, and creates hopes and fears, as fallacious as its self. For first, if we apply it to our selves, it produces mischiefs proportionable to the divers states under which we are. If a man be *full* and *prosperous*, it makes him *proud* and *secure*, for when he has not only the possession of those things the World values, but takes them as an attestation of Gods peculiar kindness and approbation, what should make him either consider or reform his guilts? If he have sanctity enough to possess him of Gods favour, and all these profitable effects of it, he will not easily be perswaded he needs more: and any man that shall tell him he does, shall be heard with the same indignation wherewith *Crasus* entertained *Solan*, when he found him *question* that  
N happiness,



happiness, which he expected he should have *admired*. Prosperity is in its self an emboldening thing, but when backt by this Opinion of it, grows into all insolence, till at last it even recoil in the face of the Donor, and *dare* God by all those enormous riots, to which it *enables* Men.

ON the other side, this Opinion presents a less *merry*, but not less *dangerous* Temptation to those in adversity; for when they shall look on *themselves* only as the *Anvil* for Gods strokes, they will be too apt to complete the *parallel* by answering it in *hardness* and inflexibility; have the *ἀνίστατον ὄν*, as the Father calls it, which reverberates the blow on him that gave it. Persevering wickedness is so naturally the issue of Desperation, that we find the *Jews* take up the one merely to countenance the other, pretend *hopelessness* to avoid reformation: Thus we find it, *Ezek. 33. 10.* *Our iniquities are upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we live?* And again more plainly, *Jer. 18. 12.* *There is no hope,* and then the Inference is ready, *let us walk every one in his own ways.* Endeavour is the child of hope, and we attempt not to atone one whom we conclude implacable, so that Wrath may *consume*, but will never *melt* us, 'tis Love only that has that *softening*, dissolving Power, and unless we discern a mixture of that in Gods *infictions*, they will never render us *malleable* to his *impressions*. We kiss a Fathers hand and rod, when an Executioners stroke we suffer rather than bear. *St. John* tells us *we love God because he loved us, 1 John 4.*

19. I wish all men would make good the Inference; but 'tis sure they are too apt to do it in the reverse, and will hate if they apprehend themselves hated; a state which at once exemplifies, and anticipates the worst part of *Hell* to us, yet very incident to those who interpret every stroke of Gods, as the effect of enmity and utter aversion. This is to do that to our selves which the *Devils* so deprecated from Christ, to torment us before our Time, it being peculiar to the vengeance of the other World to be meerly punitive, that here being rather *discipline* than *vengeance* design'd to reduce, not destroy us: and indeed besides the *pain of sense* which this Error creates, it does (to perfect the Hell) give that of *loss* also; deprives us of one of the great Evangelical felicities, that of *rejoycing in Tribulations*, which our Saviour thought so considerable, as to insert amongst his Beatitudes; and his Apostles frequently mention triumphantly as the great *privilege* and *prerogative* of a Christian. For if all adverse successes be a note of Gods disfavour, there will be no place for joy even in the most pious sufferings. St. Stephens ravishing prospect will be intercepted, and a *Martyrs* death be as uncomfortable as a *Malefactors*. But if these were the only sufferings to which joy were annex, there would be but too few concern'd in the deprivation; those wherein we are more universally interest'd, are those Chastisements of God which our Guilts provoke; which though in respect of their *cause* they are Matters of the great-

est sadness, yet in regard of their significancy and effect, they are Grounds of comfort, they signifie that God ( however displeas'd ) yet has not abandoned the care of us ; thinks us worth his *correction*, and designs our *reducement* : and the Effect will ( if not obstructed by us ) be answerable to that design : our *Chastening* here rescues us from the *sins*, and consequently the *condemnation of the world*, 1 Cor. 11. 32. and this is sure no slight motive of rejoycing ; and we are very unjust to God and our selves, if we will exchange it for the sullen murmurs of a desperate incorrigibleness.

AND as this perswasion is thus *pernicious* in reflection on *our selves*, so neither is it more *innocent* when applied to *others* ; for first, if we look on the men that prosper in the world, as the *Psalmist* speaks, *Psal.* 73. 12. we shall too often find them answer the *character* he gives them in the former part of the *Psal*m, and when from their temporal affluence, we shall conclude Gods favour to them, 'twill be hard resisting the *temptation*, which ( without that Argument ) the *Psalmist* was under, of thinking it *vain to cleanse our hearts, or wash our hands in innocency*. Nay, we shall be apt to joyn our suffrage to those in *Malachy* 3. 15. and call the *proud, happy* : and if we esteem them so, 'tis natural to desire to be like them ; so we shall quickly grow to despise a poor or *afflicted Innocence*, and embrace all thriving *prosperous sins*.

ON the other side, if we look on others in an adverse calamitous state, this Opinion suggests hard and severe sentences concerning them, inclines

clines us to judge where we should succour, and how great an accumulation of Misery that is, we may learn from *Job*, whom we find not so often nor so passionately complaining of any of his *pressures*, as of the unkind *censures* of his Friends, who weighing in this deceitful balance of temporal successes, made very false judgements of him, and as if they were to Glean after Satan, endeavoured to despoil him of that only comfort his malice had left, the Conscience of his Innocency. This is as the *Psalmist* speaks, *to persecute him whom God has smitten*, and *to talk to the grief of those whom he hath wounded*; a thing repugnant to the common temper of humanity, and much more to that tenderness, those affections and bowels Christianity requires; and therefore in this respect also, we may reckon this persuasion very injurious to Christian duty.

NOR is it less so when applied to *Causes*, in which it is full as deceitful a Rule as it is in *Persons*: God has design'd us another measure of our undertakings; his *word* and *law*, by the general proportions whereof, we are to square and accommodate our particular *actions*: he sends us not to his *providence*, and the various distributions of that, or allows us to judge of the *Justice*, by the *Success* of our *Attempts*. If that were the trial, 'twere impossible for any enterprize to be lawful, since that which should legitimate it, is subsequent to it, and can have no influence on it, to the making it good or bad: and as it does not make, so neither does it infallibly signify it to be

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either: and of those who presume it does, I should ask whence it came to do so? If by any assignation of God let them produce it; and if not thence, I'm sure it can make no pretence to certainty, God having no where oblig'd his *Providence* to make good our *phanties* and *conjectures*. Nay, if we look into Scripture examples, we shall find this irrefragably confuted; the same Cause having at several times differing success. Thus the *Israelites* were discomfited at their first assault upon *Ai*, and yet succesful after; 'twas something extrinsec to the cause that made the variation, that still continuing the same. The like we find in the case of the *Benjamites*, who though in as ill an engagement as can well be imagin'd, had yet two victories over the other Tribes, *Judg.* 20. But there is one instance that may serve for all, and that is the taking of the Ark by the *Philistines*, he that shall contemplate that, will sure never think fit to measure causes by success, unless he will give the difference also to *Dagon*, who then triumpht in the spoils of the God of *Israel*. In short, 'tis evident victories are not so entail'd upon the justest causes, but that they may be, and often are cut off, either by the guilts of the undertakers, or by some other secret disposal of the Divine wisdom; but the former is so frequently the obvious cause of it, that we are not often put to resort to the later. 'Tis no strange thing to see all *Israel* troubled by an *Achan*, or have the *Ark* taken captive from off the shoulders of a *Hophni* and *Phineas*, nor will it ever be possible

possible for the best cause to secure its self from the blasting influence of its Abettors crimes.

THIS is so clear and evident a Truth, that 'tis matter of some wonder, how the contrary perswasion should ever insinuate its self; and indeed it is not probable it ever had, if Interest, that grand *Sophister*, had not introduced it. Men engage in designs not on intuition of their *lawfulness*, but *profit*, and when they are such as nothing can warrant *à priori*, their only reserve is to make them good *à posteriore*; to bring a licence after the fact, and justify their beginning by their end; which how ridiculous soever it may seem to sober reason, yet such is the natural shame, or secular inconvenience of owning an *unjust Act*, that men will wrap themselves, though in the thinnest and most *diaphanous veils*, make use of the absurdest *pretences*, and faintest *colours* to shadow their *Guilt*, and whilest consciousness bids them say somewhat for themselves, and the case affords no solid plea, they are driven to these deplorable sleights and subterfuges. Indeed this is an argument that stands single, and is seldom us'd but in those causes that admit of no better; which we may reasonably conclude to be the reason, why it was so much insisted on by our late disturbers, who in such *abundance of light*, as they own'd, could not be suppos'd *ignorant* enough to believe themselves: 'twas certainly the destitution of better arguments that cast them upon this, forc't them to ransack the *Alcoran*, and rifle a piece of *Turkish Divinity* to make good their *Saintship*.

They now discern the unskilfulness of that *plea*, which a little time has converted to an *accusation*. The great change it has pleas'd God to make among us, retorting their conquering *Syllogismes*, and making them need a new success to justify their vaunts of the old. God grant we may not here relieve them again, and by our personal sins, help them to that which the justice of their Cause never did, nor is like to acquire them.

BUT though this *plea* of success be frequently urg'd in *policy*, yet it prevails with many who know not that it is so; indeed the *vulgar* are so much subjected to their *senses*, that generally the conclusions drawn thence are easily embrac'd, when those from Reason and Conscience have a double difficulty, first to be understood, and next to be admitted, and the most *elaborate discourse* shall not convince them of the right of that *cause*, which in the last appeal to Gods Tribunal by War, has been openly condemn'd; whilst the *spoils* of victory as much satisfy the Understanding of the *justice* of the Prize, as the Desire with the *wealth* or *glory* of it. And this is it which renders such kind of arguings very pernicious, they being so fitted to the common temper, that they seldom miss to be effectual; and engage the *beady multitude* in the Prosecution of the worst *designs*, that are recommended to them by the one *Catholick vertue* of Success. This is indeed as the Prophet speaks, Ez. 13. 22. *to strengthen the Hands of evil doers, that they turn not from their wickedness*; to dazzle their Eyes so with the splendor of prosperous



prosperous iniquity, that they can never come to take an exact view, and discern it in its true form : And doubtless this was none of the less-prevailing arts of seducement among us, and drew in many to abet those seditious practices, which all Laws of God and Man prohibited, and whereby *Christian Religion* has at once been violated and defam'd ; has not only *her precepts* broken, but *her self* aspers'd with the foul consequences of that disobedience, and so buys one injury with another ; the contempt of her *Authority* with the loss of her *Reputation*.

WE have now seen the *ill consequences* issuing from these mistakes of Gods *Providence*, but we must take notice that there remains yet as great or greater danger on the other side ; and that a *total neglect* is worse than an *erroneous construction* of it. For though God have secluded us from that more exact minute discerning of his purposes, yet he means not his *dispensations* should be lookt on as wholly *insignificant*, and therefore has given us the general scope and meaning of them, according to which we are to limit and restrain our *wandering guesses*, and also judge of *particular events*. Now as Gods original and primary *design* in the creation of Man, was to render him a *subject capable of eternal happiness* ; so also have all his *subsequent Acts* toward him aim'd at the same end : and because there is nothing removes man so far from that grand purpose of his being as Sin ; therefore God has made the suppressing of that, the universal intendment of his disposals concern-  
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ing us: so that the most different dispensations do severally pursue that one end; *prosperity* and *adversity* in their successive changes are sent to reclaim us from the *error of our ways*, with this only difference, that the *one* leads, the *other* drives. This is asserted by *St. Paul*, who tells us, that *the goodness and long-suffering of God is to lead us to Repentance*, Rom. 2. 5. And also that when we are judg'd, *we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the World*, 1 Cor. 11. 32. And indeed the whole Scripture runs in the same strain; and both from prosperous and adverse successes urges the obligation to obedience. This is the notice God expects we should take of all his dealings towards us. And the want thereof we find often sharply upbraided by God to the *Jews*: how often does he recount his redeeming them from *Egypt*, his enstating them in *Canaan*, and all his wonderful works for them, with an accusing reflection upon their ingratitude; and that we may know his *Judgements* are no less to be accounted for than his *Mercies*, we find him, *Amos* 4. making a *Catalogue* of them, and closing every period with this *Pathetick reproof* of their obstinacy, *Yet have ye not returned to me saith the Lord*. In short, God requires that we should observe every turn of his *hand*, in order to the reforming our own *lives*, and by the several *mediums* of *Gratitude* or *fear*, infer that *necessary Conclusion* of a sincere *universal Obedience*; and the neglect of this is the crime the *Psalmist* mentions, *Psalms* 28. 5. with so severe a menace. *They regard*  
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*not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands.*

A N D as this is requir'd from single persons, so also from societies and communities, which as they are in their publick capacities the most eminent subjects of Judgements or Mercies, so are they the most eminently accountable for both. And though the Neglect and Abuse of Gods methods be a very provoking *guilt* when 'tis only *personal*, yet is it much more so, when it becomes *national*: And therefore as it is every mans concern for his own *peculiar* to examine how he has answered Gods methods towards him, so is it an enquiry very pertinent in relation to the *Publick* also; especially where the dispensations have been remarkable and extraordinary; in which respect the *Inquisition* cannot appear more necessary for any than *this Nation*; upon which consideration I hope the Reader will think it no unpardonable digression, if we awhile turn aside after it.

I T is the *affirmation of our Blessed Saviour*, that *where much is given, there shall be much requir'd*; a thing so consonant with natural Equity, that we all give our suffrage to it, by making it the measure of our expectations in secular things, wherein every man looks for *returns* proportionable to his *expence* or *Industry*. The Husbandman expects a *Crop* answerable to his *Seed* and *Labour*: and in the nobler *cultures* of the Mind, we justly exact of our Pupils to let their *manners* attest the *discipline* they have been under: According to which estimate we must resolve, that Gods expectations

stations from *us* of *this Nation* cannot but be very high, there being no people under the Sun, whom he has more signaliz'd as *his own* immediate care, on whom the *Divine Oeconomy* has more constantly and even solicitously attended in all the variety of seasonable and powerful *applications*.

I SHALL not assume the work of a *Chronicle*, by giving a series of all those mercies, we receiv'd in the loins of our Ancestors; and of which we have provided one unhappy memorial, I mean our nauseating and despising them; it having been the business of our days, to disentail those two most inestimable Blessings, of a *pure Religion* and *outward Peace*, which our immediate Progenitors left us; and to derive to our posterity the contrary mischiefs of impiety and confusion.

BUT not to ravel so far back, I shall confine my reflections to so late a date, that I shall not need to bespeak the faith afforded to *Historians*; scarce any that can be my *Reader*, but is qualified to be my *witneß* too; and must acknowledge that there has on Gods part been no Method wanting, that might purifie us to himself a *Peculiar people zealous of Good works*. To that end of refining and cleansing us it was, that he kept us so long in the *furnace*, permitted us to those many *Fiery trials* of our late calamitous days. 'Twere impertinent here to give a Description of *those sufferings*, which every mans Memory can so readily represent to him; or to paint that *Flame* whose scorchings we have felt; 'tis enough to say, that God appear'd  
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in them, earnestly industrious to have reduced us; like a *skilful Captain* besieg'd us closely, straitned us so in all our interests, that it was scarce possible for us to fly any where but to himself. Indeed he that would make up an exact Catalogue of our Calamities must calculate in how many instances humane nature may be passive; there being scarce any of our suffering capacities, to which they were not liberally apportioned, our *Estates*, our *Persons*, our *Friends*, and which is more than all our *Consciences*, all groaning under the weight of that *Yoke*, which our own Sins prepar'd, and other mens sins put on. Which way soever we lookt, we saw nothing but that which might consume our *Eyes* and grieve our *Heart*: If on the Church, we saw that torn by *Schism*, spoil'd by *Sacriledge*; the abomination of desolation standing in the Holy place, and the *house of Prayer* made in the most literal sense a *den of Thieves*. If on the State, we saw the *breath* of our Nostrils, the *Anointed of the Lord* taken in their *Pits*, *Imprison'd*, and *Arraign'd*, and barbarously *Murder'd*, by those who slew him like the *Heir* in the Gospel, that they might seize on his *Inheritance*. We saw this and all other Mischiefs establisht by a *Law*, and made as irreversible as powerful malice could render them. And now in such a distress, who would not think that such a necessity should have become our vertue? And so perfect a destitution compell'd our resort to the Divine aid. And as little oppress'd States us'd to make themselves homagers to the *Romans*,

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to engage their protection; so we should have made an entire surrendry of our selves to *God*, that we might have gain'd a title to his rescues and deliverances.

THIS genuine and kindly effect I doubt not but it had in *some*, I would fain think in *many*; but we are not now considering *particulars*, but the *community*; and therefore how sincere soever such personal reformations were, they must not come under the account of publick and general, unless for their Number and Eminency they had been sufficient to have overwhelmed the contrary perverseness: Many there might be whose hearts (as 'tis said of *Josiahs*, 2 *Chron.* 34.27.) did melt, and yet the far greater number of the obdurate, still justly denominate us a *stiff neck'd people*; an Epithet wherewith God often reproaches the *Jews*, and sure we have no less evidenced our title to it; for alas, as if we had meant to revenge the inexorableness of our oppressors towards us, in our obstinacy to God; as if when we could keep nothing else, we had yet reserv'd this fullen comfort, of having our hearts impregnable, we made a shift to hold out against all these batteries; there was little *appearance*, and less *reality* of Repentance; and if some of our *lusts* were at all less raging, 'twas only because they were starved into a little tameness, the *supplies* cut off which should maintain our Riot: but when any recruits could be had, they were devoted that way, and even in the worst of times we mist not to be as luxurious as we were able: and as though we resolv'd  
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that *vice* like the *Sea*, should gain in one part what it lost in another; we took order that what was thus inevitably defalkt from those *expensive* Sins, should be made up in the *cheaper*: we could curse, and swear, & blaspheme in spight of *Sequestration*, and this wretched Immunity we made abundant use of, till we even became *Proverbial* for it; and gave our enemies pretence, to fasten it on us as our distinctive Character. Yet to shew our selves generous sinners, there was *one vice* we bought at a dear rate, I mean our as imprudent, as unchristian animosities, and *picques* among our selves; a sin that helpt to revenge all the rest: and was as well upon a humane, as divine account a grand instrument of our *ruine*. To these we may add our impatient murmurs at our sufferings, which did in some work so preposterously, as to reconcile them to the inflictors, made them unworthily desert that cause, they found chargeable to maintain, and contrary to the advice of *Solomon*, Chuse the ways of those oppressors whose prosperity they envied, *Prov. 3*. But of these *real Apostates* the number I hope was not great, I wish I could say so also of those *seeming desertors*, whose knees bowed to *Baal*, though their hearts did not: who belied their own *loyalty*, and in a shew of compliance prostituted *conscience* in several Engagements as inconsistent with each other, as they all were with duty; and such as they pretended no excuse for their *taking*, but their resolutions of *breaking*. I was indeed a sad spectacle to see what shouds every menacing  
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Edict brought in; while men ran in as much haste to take the opportunity of *Perjury*, as the primitive Christians were wont to do of *Martyrdom*: Indeed herein we seem'd to invade our enemies peculiar, would not suffer them to enjoy those marks of distinction, they had framed to themselves; so that as far as *Oaths* could signify we were all *one Party*. And yet while we thus disclaim'd Gods reliefs by these indirect attempts of our own, we took it very ill that he left us to the success of them: That he prosper'd not those methods he had interdicted, and made us Triumphant, not only over our Enemies but himself too: and upon this score many mutinous *blasphemies* were utter'd and perhaps some more thought, though I confess, generally we were not so modest, as to stick at saying the worst we could think, and indeed they that heard the frequent doubts men own'd of Gods justice, providence, nay his very being, would not think they suppress any thing as too ill to be spoken: we laid boundless expectations upon the justice of our *cause*, and as if we had extremely oblig'd God by not being *Traytors*, or *Schismaticks*, thought he wrong'd us extremely that he made us not *Victors*. *Samuel* tells *Saul* that *Rebellion was like Witchcraft*, but we seem'd to think *Loyalty* was so; that like a spell it was to keep us invulnerable, not only against our enemies but our Selves: and so countercharm all our crimes, that they should only be active to please, not hurt us. But if in the last place we reflect on our  
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selves even in relation to that *cause* in which we so much confided, 'tis to be fear'd all men will not be able to evince they suffer'd for *God* and the *King*, though they did it in their *quarrel*: 'tis the Intent must denominate whose *Martyrs* they were, it being too frequent for private passions and interests, to march under the banner of conscience; and we call that sometimes taking up the *Cross*, which is only the taking up an *animosity* or *humor*. Indeed 'tis not possible for any to be Gods *Martyr*, who is not first his *Servant*: none of us will suffer the greatest things for a person for whom we will not do the least; and 'tis absurd Hypocrisie for a man to pretend he has left *all* for God, who we see cannot be woe'd to leave the most despicable *lust* for him. He that will not part with the noise of a loud *Oath*, the pleasure of an intemperate *Cup*, the applause of a profane *Jest* for God, will surely much less expose his *liberty*, his *estate*, his *life* for him: and therefore what hazards soever any man ran in any of those, he can with no justice set it upon Gods account, unless he can produce such other acts of obedience, as may witness this to be true and genuine. And upon this trial, I fear *God's party* will appear to have been but small among us, and perhaps *the King's* not much greater, it being not very probable that those should have any great sense of duty to *him*, that had none to *God*: or that those should religiously revere *one* Commandment, who despised the other *nine*. But we need not the help of inference and probability in

this matter, the mutinous and insolent behaviour of many who profess loyalty, did too clearly evince it: And as it is said of *Joab*, that he turn'd after *Adonijah*, though he turn'd not after *Absalom*, 1 King. 2 28. and some of ours had little private rebellions of their own even while they oppos'd the more publick. I love not to pass censures on mens thoughts, yet I doubt some would be too conscious to confute me, if I should say there wanted not those, who owed their *zeal* to their *Spleen*, and did not so much love those they fought for, as hated those they fought against. And it may perhaps deserve enquiry, whether that demure *pretence of holiness* their Adversaries had put on, did not more avert some of our *Libertines* from them, than all their *real crimes*: They perhaps so far mistook them, as to suspect they might be in earnest, when they profess to advance the *power of Godliness*, and at that took an *Alarm*, and such Men (if such there were) contended not for the Liberty of their *Country*, but their *Lusts*; and could with no justice, expect either a reputation, or success from that cause which they at once helpt to defame and defeat. I am loth to go farther, and suspect that even some of the devouter sort were inspir'd more by the Spirit of *opposition* than *Piety*; yet I confess 'tis hard to resist that surmise, when 'tis consider'd that our *Liturgie* never had its due veneration, but when the *Directory* was set up against it. Indeed he that shall remember how our *private Oratories* were then throng'd and

crouded;

crouded; and shall now compare it with our *empty Churches*, will be tempted to think our *devotion* was of that sort, which is excited by *interdict*, and deadned by *invitations*; a perverse kind of Zeal kindled only by *Antiperistasis* or collision; none of that pure flame which descends from heaven. And then as our *Saviour* in another case saies, *if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness*, Mat. 6. If this fairer and more specious part of us were thus reprobable, how obnoxious were the other? and if our Earnestness in a righteous cause, by its Sinister motives or adherencies be unable to justify its self, how shall it bear that heavier task we laid on it, and plead for our other Guilts.

THIS is the true though not full account of our behaviour under *Gods Discipline*; thus did we fructifie upon his pruning us; brought forth indeed, nothing but *degenerous fruit*. The *holy Writ* leaves it as a brand of most inveterate Impiety upon *Ahaz*, that in the time of his distress he sinn'd yet more against the Lord, 2 Chron. 28. 22. and sure we have too just title to the same Character of infamy; those sufferings which were sent to chastise our sins, serv'd but to encrease them, and like the *Israelites* in the *Brick-kilns*, they multiplied the more for their oppression; we debauched even our *Executives*, and made every new calamity supply us with some new vice. And now when *Gods rod* was thus despis'd, we were in all reason to expect he should draw his sword, revenge our re-

sistance of his methods, by somewhat we could not resist, make our *Plagues* as obstinate as our *selves*, and involve us in hopeless inevitable ruine. *This certain fearful looking for of Judgment*, Heb. 10. 27. was all we had left our selves, of all the rich patrimony we were once possess'd of; and our present misery seem'd impossible to expire any way but by dying into greater.

BUT as great artificers are us'd to magnifie their Art, by choosing the most unlikely materials; so did it please God in this total indispos'dness of ours, when we were so unapt subjects to illustrate his mercy, and as if he design'd this *national deliverance* should (in its proportion) be the Transcript of our more *universal redemption*, he visited us not only in this state of misery, but enmity; when we had set our selves in defiance of his *judgments*, he laid as it were an Ambush of *mercy* for us, and surpriz'd us with safety: by such undiscernible ways *return'd the captivity of our Sion*, that *we were* indeed delivered *like them that dream*, Psal. 126. 1. gave us a *victory* without a *war*: without the intervention of *garments rolled in blood*, Esa. 9. 5. invested us in our *Triumphant robes*, and in a word, made us insensibly to glide into our long forgotten prosperity.

AND now who can imagine, but this miraculous Mutation *without* us, must also work a Change *within* us. Indeed they must have a very ill opinion of humane nature, that can think it possible it should have perverseness enough to resist such endearments; such kindly Heat must  
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needs be suppos'd to melt us; and if before our Pride disdain'd to be *compell'd*, yet even that stubbornest part of us can not object against the being *courted into amendment*. So that when God has thus yielded to our terms, left us not so much as a *Punctilio* in our way to Piety, 'tis but a reasonable expectation we should *embrace* it with as great an Earnestness, as it was formerly *rejected* by us.

AND would God we could say we did so; but alas, we still affect prodigies, take a kind of wanton Joy in defeating Gods designs, and as if we aspired to vye Miracles with him, have made our *returns* as unparallel'd as his *mercies*; so that the sum of our account is this. No Nation was ever more signaliz'd by *Gods goodness*, or its *own perverseness*, it being hard to determine in which of those respects it is most *eminent*. That this is in the general perfectly true, there are too many particulars ready to testify, indeed a whole cloud of Witnesses do concur to the proving the charge, I shall not undertake to examine *all*, yet *some* of the principal it will not be amiss to take notice of.

BEFORE we enquire into the *use* we have made of Gods Mercies, let us a little consider what our *sense* of them is; and sure of all the *interrogatories* we can put to our selves, this appears the *easiest*, the most gentle favourable Test, that even our own partialities could elect for us; it being so natural to men in misery to value a rescue, and celebrate their deliverers, that the

contrary would be the only wonder: we see even the *Jews*, who were none of the most malleable people, yet *deliverances* made impressions on them, set them to their *devout processions* and *solemn hymns* in praise of God: nay such a piece of native Religion is this, that the *Heathens* exemplifie it to us. The *Philistins* when they had taken *Samson*, magnified their *Dagon*, as having *delivered their enemy and the destroyer of their countrey into their hands*, Judg. 16. 24. So upon the victory over *Saul*, 1 Sam. 31. 9. they sent round about to publish it in the house of their *Idols*. And in all stories we find, the *Heathen Altars* were never so loaden with *Sacrifices*, as upon such occasions: and the Gospel tells us that those on whom Christ bestowed miraculous cures, were so transported with them, that their gratitude supplanted their obedience, and made them notwithstanding his prohibition proclaim the wonders he had done for them: But I fear if we reflect upon our selves, we shall not be able to match any of these instances. 'Tis true our late change was entertain'd with a Joy *profuse* enough, but not enough *religious*. We saw that great things were done for us, and thereof we rejoyced, but we did not so much consider that the *Lord* had done them, Ps. 114. and so were rather affected with the *rarity* and *profitableness*, than the *mercy* and *kindness* of the Dispensation: and though the care of our *Governours* have provided for the religious part also, assign'd *days of Purim* for the perpetual commemoration of our *deliverance*,  
yet



yet our slight observance of them does too fully evince our Joy was meerly secular ; and surely he that observ'd the numerous and loud *acclamations* in the *streets*, and the few faint *Hallelujahs* in the *Temple*, must needs say they were very disproportionate, and that how much soever the most of us rejoyc't, it was not in the *Lord*: and then we are not to wonder that it was so transient ; since it was meerly *earthly* it must needs partake of the fadingness of its *original* : whereas had we deriv'd it higher,, it would have been *lasting* and *durable* ; it could not so suddenly have expir'd, had we fetcht it from him, *in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.* But alas, our transports were such as exhausted themselves in their own noise, we exprest our Joy in *Bonfires*, and it vapour'd away in the *smoke* ; there wanted that mixture of Piety which should have fix'd that *volatile passion*, and we who at first were much more glad than thankful, within a very short time ceased to be either.

AND then as *violent Heats* when once expir'd, are succeeded by the *extremest Cold*, so has it fared with us ; we fell from our *Extasies* not to the mean, but the contrary extreme ; our vast complacencies at their parting, carried with them, even ordinary contentation, and left us not only joyless, but impatient. It was indeed matter of Equal shame and wonder, to see a scene so suddenly chang'd, wherein as in many other instances, we seem'd to have transcrib'd the co-

py of the mutinous *Israelites*, who we find in the very same Chapter, *Ex. 15.* triumphing and re-pining; and no sooner were the *Timbrëls* out of their *hands*, but *Complaints* were in their *mouths*, *vers. 24.* *What shall we drink?* and in the beginning of the next, with the same querulous opportunity they require meat. But not to wrong them in the comparison, their *Murmurs* had some extenuating circumstances which ours have not; they lookt indeed with some appetite upon *Ægypt*, and made some propofals of *Return*, but it was while they suffered the hardships of the *wilderness*; they prefer'd a repleted *slavery*, before a hungry *freedom*; but even they were not so frantick in their mutinies, as to make any such offer in *Canaan*, or have any *Emulation* to the *Garlick* and *Onions*, amidst the affluence of *Milk* and *Honey*: No'tis we Alone that have the unhappy skill of reconciling the sins of *Canaan*, and the *Wilderness*; murmur as much under our *Vines* and *Fig-trees*, as at *Rephidim*, or *Marah*, and make all the outcries of *want* and *slavery*, whilest we wallow in the utmost luxury of *plenty* and *freedom*. I need not hear specific the particulars of our *Murmurings*, this discourse being not likely to find many whose innocence will need that information, this *malignant humor* having spread so, that 'tis now become almost a scandalous (because a singular) thing to be contented. And certainly a considering *Foreiner*, that should come among us, could not but be astonisht to see a Nation so full of all those things which use to create  
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temporal satisfactions, and yet to find no body in it satisfied; to see so many parties among us, and none prosperous. This is such a riddle as would tempt a man to suspect his *senses*, and think we had all this while but dreamt of a *restoration*: been under the delusion the *Prophet* describes of the *hungry and thirsty man*, that at his *waking*, finds he is empty and his soul hath appetite, *Esay* 29. 8. 'Tis a sad, but visible truth, that all that God has done for us, hath been so far from filling our desires, that it has only serv'd to enlarge them: for I appeal to any of our loudest mutineers, whether if some years since the present state of affairs had been represented to them, drest in the worst circumstances they now complain of, they would not then have thought it extremely amiable, worth *Rachels* prize of seven years more hardship; nay whether they would not willingly have made some abatements, relinquish't part of what they now enjoy, to have had the rest secur'd? And when God has granted us all we *then* askt, shall we murmur because we could *now* perhaps ask something more; and like ingrate Debtors, pick a quarrel to evade payment? Was it not enough that he engag'd his *Omnipotence* for us, but must his *Omniscience* also be prest upon the same service? and provide all he could foresee we would wish? Alas, do we think we have the same hank upon God that some Gallants have on their trusting Merchants, that upon Peril of losing all former scores, he must still go on to supply us? shall we think no-  
thing

thing fit for oblivion but our obligations, and in this perverse sense transcribe *S. Paul*, Phil. 3. 13. *forgetting those things which are behind, reach forward to the things that are before*: this indeed too fully speaks us the off-spring of our first Parents, we can find no gust in all the fruits of Paradise, if any one be denied us; and still look not on what we *have*, but what we *want*; and as it is observ'd of the greedier sort of creatures that they relish not one bit for the vehement expectation of another: So is it with us, we *devour*, but do not *enjoy* our Blessings; and to require him to satisfy us, is to assign him the *Poets* Hell, set him with *Belus* daughters to the task of filling a sieve with water, or rolling *Sisyphus's* stone; our growing appetites still keeping us empty and restless amidst all endeavours to make us otherwise; so that whereas God uses to commit his favours to Men, as *seed* to the Earth, in expectation of an *harvest*, some fruits of gratitude and obedience; they seem with us rather to be flung into a *Gulph*, whose property is only to *swallow* never to *fructifie*.

I KNOW mens *Minds* are so possess'd with their discontents, our daily mutinous blasts have puff'd up and swelled our grievances to such a vastness, that he must expect to be very impatiently heard, that shall attempt to represent them in a lesser size; yet sure 'twere not impossible even upon a direct view, to demonstrate them very *light* and *moderate*: but upon a comparative, perfectly *trivial* and *inconsiderable*; and 'tis a little

little strange, that we who bare our *late suffering estate* with so much Impatience, should not have impressions enough left in our memory, to confront to all our *present regrets*. Do we not quietly now possess the fruits of our own, or our Progenitors *industry*, without danger of any Sequestration, but what our own Luxuries inflict? Are not our *Persons* at freedom; deliver'd from that kind word, and unkind thing, SECURING? So that when we rise in the Morning, we need not fear our next lodging shall be in the Goal or dungcon; nor when we sit down to our Meal, suspect the intrusion of *arm'd uninvited Guests*, who, ere whiles we know, were wont to surprise us, as the Plague did the *Israelites*, even while the meat was yet in our mouths; are not our Lives under the custody of known *Laws*, so that no man is in danger that will but keep himself within those *Boundaries*; nor need fear to be mockt into his grave by shews and Pageantries of Justice? And besides these real *escapes* from slavery, are we not rescued from the most imbittering circumstance of it, the having *servants rule over us*, a thing which rendred our subjection as mean and servile, as it was sharp and pressing, and which we were then so sensible of, that it never mist to bring up the rear of our Complaints. Lastly, if we reflect upon our higher spiritual concerns, are we not freed from those boistrous robust temptations, which with the violence of Famine and Sword, Beggary and Death assaulted our constancy, and left no mean between  
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Martyrdom and Apostasie? Are we not also restor'd to all those spiritual advantages which we once profess'd so much to value? That *well of life* now lies open before us, after which we once panted like the *Hart* after the *water-springs*; our ancient *worship* is revived, and wants only our attendance to make it solemn; whereas the *abomination of Desolation* stood in the holy place, our prayers were turned to sin; needed, but were denied the *Liturgy* to pray against them, or atone their guilts. We have no longer *stones* given us for *bread*, nor experiment that sad riddle of being at once cloyed and starved amidst excess of preaching, suffering a Famine of the Word. And now are all these worth no regard, if they are not, why did we exclaim so loudly when we wanted them? if they are, why are we still as querulous now we have them? 'Tis sure, these include all our great and substantial interests as men, and Christians, and those being provided for, 'tis not easily imaginable what others we should have important enough to make us querulous, unless it be those of Passion and Humour. One mans *ambition* perhaps wants a satisfaction, another mans *avarice*, a thirds *spleen*; and this *discord* makes up the very unmusical Harmony of our *murmurs*. If we see but a *Mordecai* in the Kings gate whom we wish removed, we can like *Haman* find no gust in any thing we enjoy. If we see some, who we think have born less of the burden and heat of the day, rewarded equally or perhaps above our selves, we are sure to make out the Parable,

nable, by murmuring at the good man of the house: Or if *Nineveh* be spar'd, if all be not executed to whom we have denounc'd destruction, we like *Jonah* sit down in a sullen discontent, and grow weary of our lives, because others are permitted to enjoy theirs. To these and other heads of the like nature, 'tis apparent our *grievances* may be reduced; and then if the balance be put into any dispassionate hand, 'tis sure they can never become a counterpoize to the other real benefits we enjoy, but will in the *Prophets* phrase, appear *lighter than vanity and nothing*.

BUT I suppose some will say, 'tis not only present uneasinesses of which they are impatient, but the possibility of future, a fear of relapsing into our former estate by the ill managery of our present: To these I shall answer, That admit it were so, yet sure 'twill be no wisdom to anticipate our miseries, to forestall discontents, and make foresight as painful as actual suffering. In other forbidden instances we chuse to enjoy the present, and with an *Epicurean* Indifferency cry, *Let us eat and drink for to morrow we dye*, 1 Cor. 15.

32. How is it that we here become so unluckily sagacious, unless it be that murmuring is a Sensuality we count equivalent, nay superior to all rational satisfactions; and therefore that we may have no intermission of that delight, suborn our phancies to find occasions, and fetch in from the future those supplies which the present affords not: But besides this, I should in the second place ask these great *Diviners*, why they do not  
also



also foresee, that this very *mutinous temper* of theirs is the most direct and infallible means of bringing those *mischiefs* they pretend to fear; that it is so, is most evident, and so well observ'd by our *Adversaries*, that there is little doubt, they have not only pleasure, but designs upon it; and to that purpose have their *Engins* on work to blow up the *hot Spirits* among us, in expectation from thence to raise a *flame*. So blind a thing is *Passion*, that it hurries on to the things which in their issue we most abhor; makes us our *Enemies drudges*, and the *forgers* of our own shackles; and whilst we cry out of petty Indulgences, we ourselves give them in the *lump*, what we grudge them in *parcels*: This is a miserable infatuation, and while we act thus unreasonably, we are sure no competent declamers against ill managery. But besides this natural effect of our murmurs, we are also to remember that there is a Divine vengeance attending it: when *bounties* and *largesses* are quarrell'd at, we necessitate God to another Method, nay indeed, not only his *vengeance*, but even his *kindness* seems to suggest it, when he sees our constitutions such, that his gentle applications work contrary effects: 'tis very apposite for him to try whether the *Antiperistasis* will operate on the other side; if we smart thus under *lenitives*, 'tis but fit to essay, if *corrosives* will ease us; and the only remaining experiment for the making us *happy*, is to make us *miserable*.

BUT would God we might yet prevent the need of such unkindly *expedients*, and by a sober estimate,

estimate, and thankful sense of what we have, provide to conserve it: not fastidiously despise great and eminent  *blessings* , because perhaps they come not home to every part of our  *wishes* . Alas, those plenary satisfactions agree not with the nature of Earthly things: 'tis an observation long since rais'd from the Globular and Triangular form of the World and our Hearts, that 'tis impossible the one should be fill'd with the other, there will still be some angles, some vacuities left; our very  *accessions*  create new  *wants* , and like an unsound limb, the healing of  *one*  Sore is the breaking out of  *another* . Every thing under the Moon partakes of her  *vicissitudes* , augments and decreases only with this Difference, that though their  *wains*  be to as low a degree as hers, they never are perfectly  *at the full* . There never was, nor never will be a State here completely happy: And as the  *Philosopher*  handsomly reproacht the impatience of the  *Persian*  King for the death of his Wife, by undertaking to revive her, if he could help him but to the names of  *three*  men that had never griev'd to write upon her  *Tomb* ; so surely we may make the like offer to our  *malecontents* , and engage to redeem all their uneasinesses, if they can point us out (I say not three, but)  *one age*  wherein there were no  *complaints* . What then are our clamorous Repinings, but so many loud  *invectives*  against Gods decree; a Desire to subvert his fundamental  *Law* , and confound the  *distinction*  he has irreversibly set between our  *Earthly*  and our  *Heavenly*  state: and  
alas,

alas, What mad insolence is this, to expect that the whole *Oeconomy* of the world must be chang'd only to humour us? that God must replant us a *Paradise*, pluck up every one of the Briers and Thorns which were our native curse? nay, bring down *Heaven* to us, and enstate us in undisturb'd unmix'd felicities? This is indeed simply considered a very wild expectation, but yet more so when 'tis considered how we qualify our selves for such a privilege: for let me ask, are we as eager to anticipate the *holiness*, as the *happiness* of Heaven? Do we as passionately desire to do *Gods* will, as that God should do *ours*? And æmulate the *Angelical* obedience and purity, as much as *bliss*? These are Interrogatories which need no verbal Answer, our lives do too fully resolve them in the negative, and then how shameless a partiality is it, thus to carve to our selves, and chuse out of either state what we best like, reserve all the *sensualities* of this world, and yet cry out for the *impassibleness* of the next; but alas, these are pretensions as inconsistent as they are bold, our *vices* having such a native inseparable adherency of *pain* and *vexation*, that 'tis not the most dexterous managery of a sin that can ever sever them, but if we will retain the *one*, we must the *other* also: A Truth which might be exemplified to us throughout the whole *Catalogue* even of sensual sins; but it is most eminently visible in this of *murmuring*, which stays not as others do to take Pain at the *rebound*, and by way of result, but has it as its first *Element* and principle; it being its  
self

self almost as great a pain, as any it can betray us to: and yet to secure an advance and *perpetuity* of Torment, every Event serves to foment and heighten it, and the most desperate things are equally combustible to that *flame*. Indeed he that is possess'd with that humour, has a kind of fury within him, that will never let him rest: And alas, what *Legions* of such evil Spirits are now among us? How are we as it were inspir'd with *Mutiny*, it being the *universal dialect* of the Nation; and of many in it, who cannot be suppos'd to found it in any observation of their own, but are led by the *common genius*, and bellow rather by consent with the rest of the herd, than for any uneasiness, at least of *injustice* and *oppression* (for such only give pretence for *Mutiny*) that themselves feel. And since 'tis become a *Plebeian vice*, would God our *Gentry* would use it as they do their *fashions*, and leave it off (if for no better reason) for its being *vulgar*: And indeed 'twere but equitable, that those who have taken up so many sins upon *punctilio*, should for once lay down one upon the same score. The *Athenian* State put down their *Ostracisme* (which otherwise they were fond enough of) because it was debased, by happening to fall on *Hyperbolus*, a despicable and abject person: and there seems not much difference in the cases, save only that we are more tenacious of *Sins*, than they of *Punishments*; and I fear we shall so long retain this, till we find it its own *Licitor*, not only in the *present uneasiness*, but in that more fruitful harvest of Mischiefs, where-

of it has now sown the seeds. We see here what our thankfulness is, for those eminent miraculous mercies we have receiv'd, and the account of that is an unhappy *specimen*, what we are like to find, when we survey the uses we have made of them, which God knows have been so unnatural and perverse, as does too fully parallel the former instance.

FOR first, if we reflect upon our *spiritual blessings*, what has the enjoyment of those advantages produced, but the contempt of them; we have an easie free access to God in his Sanctuary, our Churches are no longer *Garrisons* to keep out the worship, to which they were devoted, but like *hospitable doors*, are open to the regular piety of any that will enter. And now we have this liberty, now the *flaming sword* is removed, we have lost all appetite to the *Tree of life*, can willingly let those *Everlasting gates* (as the *Psalmist* styles them) *Psal. 21. stand as everlastingly open* ere we enter them: And though the *Fabricks* are by Gods providence rescued from their dust and ruins, yet many of us endeavour to reduce them to a yet worse desolation, strive to depopulate those sacred Mansions, and execute against them that *prophetick threat* concerning *Nineveh*, *Nahum. 1. Leave them empty, void and waste.* And indeed so they are, if not in an absolute, yet in a Comparative sense; for could we at any time of *Divine Service* make an estimate of *all* the persons that are absent, 'twould scarce be discern'd that any are there; were all corners ransackt, what a multitude

multitude of *Recusants* should we find upon a far differing account from that of Conscience? Some we should see stretching themselves upon their beds, keeping a Sabbath indeed, but to their *flesh*, not their *God*; others perhaps we may find rous'd from their Couches, upon the summons not of *Religion* but *Vanity*; some new garment is to be fitted, some exotick dress essayed, and they who grudge one hour to the Preachers glass, can spend many at their own; where they are so taken up with their *Idolatry* to themselves, that they think of no other worship; nay, as the world goes, 'twere well this were the worst diversion, that some did not keep from Church, that they might in the interim, defile those lesser Temples of God they carry about them, and cut themselves off from the Communion of *Christs body*, to make themselves members of an Harlot: or that others were not *Bacchus* his Votaries when they should be *Gods*, spend that time in their frantick revels, and sing a *Dithyrambick* instead of *Te Deum*. As for the *Mammonist*, if he keep any holy day, 'tis like the *Israelites* to his *Gods of Gold*, *Exod. 32. 31*. He is looking with veneration on his Idoliz'd treasure, numbring those bags he dares not use, or perhaps with a more active Zeal pursuing the means of encreasing them. Thus alas, may we go from one to another, and as it was in *Ezekiels* vision, see still greater abominations, *Ezek. 8*. And certainly that All-seeing Eye, which discerns what multitudes do thus busie themselves, at the times even of his solemn-

est worship, cannot but adjudge us most profane despisers of his mercy in restoring it: Yet would to God 'twere only the *absent* upon whom that sentence would fall; but alas, the behaviour of many in the Church does too loudly testifie how little of devotion brings them thither, and at how mean a rate they value all that is done there: Those *Eyes* which there should wait on God, as those of a *Servant on the hands of his Master*, *Psal. 123. 2.* are rolling about to fetch in all the vanities and temptations which can occur to them, and look *every way*, but *towards Heaven*. Our *Tongues* which should be toucht with a Coal from the Altar, devoted wholly to Hymns and Prayers, are busied in *private Colloquies* with those about us: Business, News, nay, all the impertinent chat of our most vacant hours, is then taken up to entertain us; so that he who would know the *talk of the Town* or neighbourhood, need go neither to Exchange nor Market, the *Church* will as certainly supply him: And this ill employment of our *Tongues*, engages the like of our *Ears*, which when they should be hearkening what the Lord God will say concerning us, are listening to those *vain discourses* we hold with one another, from all which outward indecencies we may too surely collect the inward irreverence of our heart. And is it possible that this should now be the Temper of *those*, who not long since seem'd to bewail their *exclusion* from those sacred Assemblies: Did we long for *them* as *David* for the *waters of Betlehem*, when they appear'd unattainable,



able, and when they are brought to us, refuse to taste them, poure them out not as he did in *devotion*, but in *contempt*? 'Tis true indeed, in *temporal Delights possession* usually proves a nauseating thing, and takes off our *appetite*; but it uses not to be so in *spiritual*, whose peculiar property it is not to satiate, but excite by fruition: But alas, though the Things we converse with are *spiritual*, our Hearts are *carnal*, and that is the cause why instead of crying out with the *Psalmist*, *When shall I come to appear in the presence of God*, *Psal. 42.* We, like those in *Malachy*, Chap. 1. 13. *Snuff at his service, and say, What a weariness is it?* A weariness indeed it appears in the literal sense with many, who sleep at it as men over-labour'd, and scarce take so sound repose in their own houses as in Gods; indeed such is the variety of rude behaviour that is there us'd, that should an *unbeliever* come into their Assemblies, he must surely (as *St. Paul* supposes in another case, *1 Cor. 14. 23.*) say *we are mad*; to see some gazing, some whispering, some laughing, others sleeping, and perhaps the far fewer number praying; is such a *medly*, as the most brutish *Idolaters* never admitted in their *worships*; and the way of worshipping *Mercury*, by throwing stones, or *Hercules* by cursing, is a sober and decent kind of service compar'd with this. And now alas, when will the *Church* recover its ancient Title, and become the *house of prayer*; 'tis sure according to the present appearance it may have many more proper names, that being the least part of the bu-

finess done in it: 'Tis true, there are some that make it a *Sanctuary*, but 'tis only against the penalties of the *Law*, or reproach of errant *Atheism*; they come to save their money or their credit; others perhaps shun the solitariness of being at home, and come not as to a place of *Devotion*, but *Concourse*; and 'tis to be doubted, some visit that place as they do many others, because they have nothing else to do: They want their week-days diversion, and so are driven thither upon meer destitution of more grateful entertainments; make it a kind of *Sunday play-house*, sit there as *Spectators* or *Judges*, to see the *company*, or censure the *Preacher*, but never remember that themselves have any other part to act; or are beheld by *Him*, who will not always be patient of such profanation; but will, as the *Scripture* speaks, *Repay them to their face, who thus contemn him to his*. We know among men, every one counts his House his fortress; and an Affront offered him *there*, doubles the Injury, and is not only a *contempt*, but an *invasion*: and shall it not be a proportionable enhancement with *God* also, thus to defie him *within his own doors*, and approach his presence in an impious bravery, the more fully to shew him, how little we regard him. At this rate while we address our selves, we may as ill manner'd Guests be *forbid his house*: Interrogated by *God* as the *Jews* were, *Is. i. Why dost thou tread my Courts?* A total abandoning of *Worship* being more fair and ingenuous than such *Devotion*: wherein like the *barbarous souldiers*,  
we

we bring **Christ** a *Scepter* only to smite him on the head with it; and make a profane of *homage* to give our selves the sport of the *mockery*: nay, 'tis sadly to be fear'd, that God may *thrust* us out of his House, *shut* his Doors against us, *rescue* his Service and himself from our profanation, and put us again under the same, (or a worse interdict than that) which lately lay upon us.

HAVING now seen our scandalous Irreverence towards Gods worship in general, 'tis too easie to make Application to the *several parts* of it; every one of which must necessarily partake of the contempt which falls upon the whole; for while we bring no thoughts but *secular* with us; those are equally disagreeing to all the *Divine* offices: 'twill be needless therefore to trace our wandrings in each of those, since our whole *behaviour* in the Church is one great *deviation* from the business we should come about: yet that supersedes not to every guilty person himself the necessity of a more distinct and particular reflection. 'Tis sure at the *last dreadful Audit*, we must account for every of those spiritual advantages we have abus'd; and alas, what a *dismal reckoning* will many of us have then to give up, when our *prayers* which we now turn into Sin, shall be turn'd into *perdition*: and *We* who would not supplicate our God, shall in vain invoke the *mountains and hills to hide us from the face of the lamb*, when that Word which we now so fastidiously despise, that it must be drest up in the colours of humane Rhetorick, to make us at all pa-

tient of it, and becomes then only tolerable to us when it is farthest removed from being Gods: when *that word*, as our Saviour speaks, *shall judge us*, and that gracious invitation to life end in that fatal sentence, *Goye Cursed*. Nay, when our very Propitiation shall *plead* against us, and the crucified Body of our Saviour, which we have in *Effigie* so often recrucified, in our unworthy approaches; or impious neglect of the holy *Eucharist*, shall *witnes* against us as its murderers, when we shall be found not *sprinkled* as with the blood of a sacrifice, but *imbrued* as with that of slaughter: when all these means of our salvation, shall thus miserably convert, and from the *savour of life*, become that *unto death*, 2 Cor. 2. 16. then we shall to our amazement find, how differing our estimates of them were from Gods; and in his vengeance read the value he put upon them. What then have we now to do, but to anticipate our *dooms-day*, and judge *our selves* that we may not be judg'd of the Lord: To make an impartial account of all these our profanations, and accuse our selves before his *mercy seat*, that so we may prevent the arraignment at his *bar of Judgement*. And as Offenders are usually enjoyn'd to acknowledge their guilts in the very places where they committed them; so let us make the *Church* the Scene of our *penitence*, as we have of our *faults*: By our strong crying and tears, deprecate our former indevotion, and by an exemplary Reverence, redress the scandal of our Profaneness. This, and only this is the way to secure us against the

the *final* Vengeance of these sins; nay, and against the *intermedial* also: for we are not to expect that so unkind abuse of mercy shall be wholly respited to another world, it being so exasperating a *crime*, as must in all probability awake Gods *fury*, and pull down present Judgments, I wish the Event do not too soon attest the reasonableness of this supposal.

IF from our *spiritual* Blessings, we now descend to our *temporal*, we shall not appear much better managers of those; they being generally employed to purposes the most distant from those, for which they were given. And first for our *peace*, that great comprehensive enjoyment, upon which all others are dependent, and which is to our *civil* Capacities, the same that *health* is to our *natural*; the thing by which we relish and taste the rest of our comforts, we may from the Song of *Zachary*, Luk. i. learn for what intent God bestows it: *Deliverance from enemies* is to no other end, but that we may *serve God in holiness and righteousness all the daies of our life*: But alas, he that observes how we employ our quiet, must surely say it serves little to the advancement either of Holiness or Righteousness: For the first of these we have already seen, how little of *holiness* we shew even in that place where nothing else should be admitted; and we are not so preposterously religious, to shew more in others. That *Piety* which is so cold and benumn'd under the warm breath of the *publick Ordinances*; we may well presume stark frozen, in  
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our more retir'd offices : and if it thus faint and sink in comfort, 'tis sure more liable to the Wise mans *Va soli*, and utterly dies when we are alone. 'Tis true indeed, these *Closet transactions* are immediately visible to none but the *searcher of hearts*, yet in true Devotion there is such a *Symmetry* and proportion, that the Inferences we make by *analogy* may be very irrefragable ; nay, 'tis to be fear'd many lye open to a yet clearer *conviction*, and may be proved to have few or none of those private intercourses with heaven ; for though a negative be not simply evincible, yet as in civil cases we prove a man not to have been at this time in such a place, by his having actually been in another ; so were the whole Week, Moneth, perhaps Year : of some men exactly traced, we should find them so engrossed with other *diversions*, that there will scarce be found any Minute for *devotion* to interpose : Mens worldly or fleshly Concerns so divide their *time*, that God from whom 'tis all deriv'd can be afforded no tribute out of it. Yet alas, 'twere well if this privative sort of impiety were all we had to answer for : but 'tis too apparent we do not only *neglect* God, but *reproach* and violate him : what else are those bold and insolent *blasphemies* wherewith we daily assault him, making him the mark at which all our wild Passions are shot. Do we want any thing either for our *use* or *delight*, presently God is accused, his *providence* or his *goodness* questioned ; and he declaim'd against either as impotent or illiberal. Does any  
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body vex or disquiet us, God must have his share of our displeasure, his sacred name must be profaned, and we count our fiercest *Revilings* of men, faint and insignificant, if not inspired with the most *dreadful* and *horrid Oaths*; Nay, he stands obnoxious to all the displacencies we receive even from inanimate creatures, if a *Die* or a *Card* run amiss, our resentments are presently vented upon him; he is profaned and vilified, as if he were the *Cheat* that rookt us of our *money*, because he does not secure us from those losses, to which we wantonly expose our selves; nor is it only our eager and warmer *passions* that thus invade him: Our pleasanter *moods* do the very same, and we blaspheme by way of divertisement; every impertinent story or insipid *Jest*, must have the haut-goust of an Oath to *recommend* it, as every incredible Narration has to *attest* it: to say nothing of those more solemn and deliberate *perjuries*, wherein we impiously suborn Gods venerable and dreadful *name*, to be the Engin of our fraud and malice: and as if we thought he would forswear as well as we, bring him to *countenance* those Crimes he has vowed to *punish*. Thus do we with a prodigious impiety contaminate even divinity its self, make it the sink for all our puddles to run into; and prostitute that *name* which as the *Psalmist* speaks, is *great, wonderful and holy*, to all the unholy *purposes*, our *Passions*, our *Interest*, or our *Phancies* can suggest to us.

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THIS *profaneness* is so proper a foundation for *Atheism*, that we are not to wonder to see so many advance from the one to the other, they pay so little of the reverence due to God, that at last they turn their *impiety* into *argument*, and infer him not to be God, whom they treat so unlike one. And truly this seems to be the grand piece of *Logick*, which has disputed many, not only out of *Christian*, but all *native Religion*. How unhappily successful it has proved among us is too apparent in those impious discourses which are every where heard, wherein men are arriv'd to such a licentiousness, that *David's Atheist* was a modest Puny, who only said in his Heart *there is no God*, and perhaps upon that account shall by some be adjudged to deserve the Epithet the *Psalmist* gives him, and be indeed thought a *fool* that would not own what would now a-daies so certainly denominate him a *Wit*, or in the solemn stile a *Master of Reason*. And indeed they will attest the propriety of the stile, they rather *governing Reason*, than being *govern'd* by it; otherwise 'twould be hard to discern, how from different *premises* the same *conclusion* should be induced: and those who in the late adverse times denied God in revenge of their sufferings, should now pay their gratitude also in the same manner, and renounce him as (or more) loudly since his signal attestation of that *righteous cause*; his not owning whereof was then their *principal plea*. The truth is, 'tis a little strange how *Atheism* could admit such enhancing accessions as we find it has;  
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for it being the completion and highest step of Ill, and that to which all others do but subordinately tend, one would think it should from its first appearance in the world, have been so mature and full grown a sin, as could be capable of no improvement; but so subtilly wicked are these later daies, that we can never be brought to a *non ultra*, but still find something to add to the compleatest sin: therefore though of those that are really Atheists, one cannot be said to be more so than another, yet some may be more daringly, and mischievously so; and sure in that respect our *modern*, surmount all *former*: They were generally on the defensive part, took up the *tenet* as a *buckler* against the unwelcome invasions and Checks of conscience, and design'd nothing but the more *peaceable enjoyment* of their *lusts*; but *now* men do not only use, but love it; make themselves its avowed *Champions*, seek to win it *Proselytes*; and in short, appear so zealous for it, as if they made it their *religion* to have none. And God knows, too many such reversed kinds of *Evangelists* we now have, who with as great design unteach Divinity, as the first Propugners taught it, and their *number* and *boldness* have so encreas'd since the return of our *peace*, that sure the next Age will have little cause to think *Religion* had any share in the *Restoration*. Thus have we done our parts to supersede that obligation of serving God in holiness, by leaving no God to serve; and after the most signal attestation of his Deity in our rescue, we do like those *ingrate persons*,

persons, who seek to subvert those by whom themselves were established, and deny him because he has own'd us.

THIS is the *holiness* wherewith we have serv'd him, since our being deliver'd from the hands of our Enemies, and our *righteousness* has been very proportionable, for if we look into the dealings of all ranks of men; we shall find the same vein of *deceit* run through all transactions. A few years since Sequestration and plunderings, those *whole-sale robberies* had so over-top'd the rest, that like an *Epidemick disease* they had overwhelm'd, if not the *kind*, yet at least the *notice* of all other Injustices: but since those *Leviathans* are withdrawn, the *lesser Devourers* supply their place; Fraud succeeds to Violence; and in all places, all occasions of commerce, we still meet with Sequestrators. The adulterated wares, and false measures in *Shops*; the dilatory proceedings, and evasive tricks in *Law*; the various and unworthy Cheats of *Creditors*, and the mean and dishonest advantages which are watcht in all sorts of *Contracts*, are too irrefragable proofs hereof. Nay, not only our Business, but our very *recreations* expose us to these deceits, as some of our bankrupted Gamesters can too sadly witness, what troops of *Harpyes* attend those sports is every mans observation: 'Tis strange so many should yet be to learn the prudence to avoid so known a danger, wherein a man is at once made active and passive in the same Robbery, and does himself defraud his *family* of that, whereof

whereof he is defrauded by *another*. But amongst these many injustices, there is none wherein Men seem generally to find such a gust and sensuality, as those wherein God is concern'd; *twenty* Laybooties humor them not so much as *one* from the Clergy; and if the Quakers should be mustered according to that one Tenet of not paying Tythes, we should indeed find their numbers formidable. How subtle even the rudest persons are in defaulting those dues, we see by every daies experiment, the over-reaching their Minister being the grand Triumph of a Rusticks wit; so that not only their covetousness but their vanity is concern'd in it: I know 'tis the usual *apology* for this kind of Sacrilege, that either the *maintenance* of the Clergy is too much, or their *merit* too little; for the first, I think it may be demonstrated, That there is no *liberal Science*, and but few *Mechanick trades*, from which a man may not hope as plentiful a *subsistence*, as this affords to the generality of its *professors*: However I shall leave those that make this objection to dispute it with that authority, which has allotted them this proportion; desiring them to consider, that whatever the support of the Clergy is, it costs them nothing; no man having Purchast more, than what remains of the Estate, after his Tyth is paid. As to the second, I confess 'tis extremely to be wisht, that the *negligence* and *vice* of Some did not give too much *pretence* to the Allegation; and to such I cannot but apply the words of our Saviour, Mat. 18. 7. *woe be to the man*

*man by whom the offence cometh*; yet certainly 'tis very incompetent, to justify the detention of their *legal rights*: for till the Law which has assign'd them, delegate the Forfeiture to me, the greatest *enormities* of my Pastor, cannot entitle *me* to any thing that is *his*: And indeed what blame soever is really due to *some*, we must expect it should extend to *all*, if the Accusers were to have the benefit of the Mulct; and (as in the late confusions) all Ministers should be made *scandalous*, in order to the making them *poor*.

'T W E R E easie to draw up a far larger Catalogue of those *injustices* we daily commit; for as a man has divers other concerns besides his goods, so he may be injur'd in all those: and truly the iniquity of these daies, seems fully commensurate to all the suffering capacities of mankind: we *weigh* our own and others Concerns, in very *differing balances*, and offer those Injuries without any regret, which we can with no patience *suffer*: How nicely Jealous is every one of us of his *own* Repute, and yet how maliciously Prodigal of *other mens*? so that Defamation is become one of our main *Topicks* of discourse, furnishes entertainment to all companies; the *present* owe their Divertisement to the *absent*, and many would be drein'd quite dry, were it not for this reserve, which like an unexhaustible spring, still supplies fresh matter of talk. In like manner how carefully do we avert any hurt or mutilation of our *own bodies*, and yet how barbarously inconsiderate are we of *others*, to whom we do the greatest

greatest outrages rather than use any violence to our Passion, or restrain an angry Humor: only I confess there is one Instance, wherein though we are *unjust*, we are not so *partial*; but expose our selves also, and that is in the case of *Duells*, a barbarous custom wherein 'tis hard to define, whether the *Wickedness* or *Folly* be greater; yet it maintains its way in spite of all the methods God has us'd to make us better or wiser: Of this there are too many, and too noted instances since our restoration, as if we were so enamour'd of *destruction*, that when we are prevented of it from our *Enemies*, we seek it from *one another*, or thought *publick Peace* so intolerable, that when 'tis cast upon us (as sure ours, if ever any may be said to be) we are fain to take in private quarrels, as our rescue from that dull quiet, and court the utmost *mischiefs*, to avoid the oppression of the greatest *happiness*. Thus perversly do we countermines Gods purposes of kindness, and when he has secur'd us, solicitously seek to be deliver'd from our safety; project new *dangers*, and dare his power with a yet harder Task, the *delivering us from our selves*: And whilst we thus avert our quiet, 'tis no wonder that we produce no better effects of it; nor fructifie under that, which we will not permit our selves to enjoy.

AND as upon this general view, we appear very ill managers of our Peace, so shall we much more, if we reflect on those many particular blessings which are wrapt up in that, of which we make so perverse use, that we therein no less

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violate *Sobriety*, than we have already appear'd to do *piety* and *righteousness*; so filling up the measure of our iniquity by transgressing all the fundamental rules of Christianity, *living* neither *soberly*, *righteously*, nor *Godly* in this present world, Tit. 2. 12. And of those *advantages* which are the appendages to Peace, there are two most eminent; *Plenty* and *Liberty*, both of which are the more remarkable in our present quiet, by how much the deprivation of each was the greater. For the first, we know the *late times of rapine*, had torn from many among us their whole subsistence, so entirely despoil'd them that they were reduc'd to *Jobs* condition, and connected the two extreme points of Birth and Death, by a middle state of the like nakedness and destitution: and to such, our late *restoration* was a kind of *Civil resurrection*; rais'd them like *Elisha's* dry bones, from the most hopeless state, and by a successive possession of their own *Inheritances*, made them *heirs to themselves*. And though all were not so wholly divested, yet like those *Canaanites* whom the *Jews* did not extirpate, they were put under *Tribute*: and while persons who knew so well how to exact were *Lords Paramount*, a bare being was all could be expected, they seem'd rather *Stewards* than *Owners* of their *fortunes*, and had rather the trouble than advantage of their *Managery*: And who would not think that this so long want of plenty, should have taught us *sobriety* in the using it; that *desuetude* should have worn out the skill of *luxury*, and we should not have known



known how to be riotous: but alas, our memories have been too faithful to us in this particular, no one of our vanities is fall'n into oblivion, but on the contrary the art of Voluptuousness so improved, as if all the time that was lost from the *Practick*, had been spent in the *Theory*, and we had for so many years been contriving new kinds and degrees of excess. Indeed it is too sure we retain'd the *affection* when we had lost the *power* of rioting; and 'tis not our prosperity seduces us, but we it. For as the *Sun* though it lends its rayes to the begetting of the vilest *Insects*, yet makes no such production but upon apt matter, *slime* and *putrefaction*: so neither would the most opulent fortune make us sensual, did it not find us dispos'd and prepar'd for it. How forcible those *propensions* are, appears by the multitude of *objects* on which they work; For they had need be strong Inclinations that take in all Opportunities, nay possibilities of actuating themselves, and such 'tis evident ours are, there being nothing capable of ministring to luxury, which we use not to that purpose. Our *Meat* is no longer apportioned to our Hunger, but our Tasts: so that the *Stomach* is made meerly passive in the matter of Eating; serves only to receive those loads we charge it with, whilst its Elections and Choices are forestall'd by the *palate* or *phancy*; nay, 'tis not permitted so much as a negative voice, not allowed to refuse what is either for kind or quantity destructive to it: We do with studied mixtures force our relucting

appetites, and with all the Spells of *Epicurism*, conjure them up that we may have the pleasure of laying them again. Thus unworthily *treacherous* are we to Nature, which while we pretend to *relieve*, we *oppress*, by giving her not only beyond her need, but sufferance: And to shew we are no less dextrous in mixing *sins* than *meats*; our very *Pride* (though in its self an intellectual vice) mingles with our *Gluttony*, every thing is insipid that is not costly; and it is thought an ignoble Peasant-like thing to eat a plain meal: Nor is he now to be lookt on as a Gentleman, whose single Ordinary costs not as much as would be (and himself would perhaps some years since have thought) a fair exhibition for some whole families. And that we may not be charg'd with *partial intemperance*, we go not less in that of drink, wherein we are so nice and critical, that 'tis become a special skill and faculty to *judge of liquors*: But how great soever our *curiosity* be, 'tis sure our *excess* is greater, and does not only over-match but supplant it; there being no drink so unpleasant which the love of a debauch will not reconcile us to. So great a malice do we bear to our *reason*, that to oppress it, we are content to expose our darling, and do violence to our very *sense*. How unhappily predominant this brutish Vice is, need not here be told, since it too evidently attests its self, to every mans observation, it no longer seeking the shelter of night and darkness, but impatient of such delay, appears in the broadest light; and he is now a  
*slow-*

*slow-paced drunkard*, that has not finish'd his *course*, perhaps begun another, before the *Sun* has ended his: nay, so is the *Scene* chang'd, that *sobriety* is become the reproachful thing, such as even those who value it dare not own, and are either driven to *preserve* it by shifts and artifices, or else chuse to *abandon* it rather than hazard the scandal. And certainly this is the great advantage this sin has for the propagating its self, for 'tis impossible *Bestiality* should be so universally agreeable to mankind, that all should pursue it out of *appetite* and liking: 'tis this *Fear* that engages many in it; and though it have too many *voluntiers*, yet sure 'tis this *press* that helps to make up its *numbers*, which as it speaks the great baseness of those who are thus asham'd both of *Piety* and *Humanity*, and had rather cease to be *men*, than appear to be *Christians*; so is it a sad indication of *National impiety*, a fatal *Symptome* that we have neer fill'd up the measure of our iniquities, and are ripened for the woes denounced against those who *call evil good, and good evil*, *Esa. 5.20.* which sure was never more palpably done than in this instance, wherein *temperance* is branded for *ill nature*, and dulness of humor; whilest the most *swinish Excess* must pass for *sociableness, friendship, and hospitality*; names which have been so long prostituted that they have lost their native use, and men have forgot those very distant things to which they originally belong'd, yet sure such once there were: God made us *sociable creatures*, and we might still continue so

upon the strength of that first principle, and need not owe our *intercourse* to our *debaucheries*; no, nor our friendships neither, which have been so far from being preserv'd that way, that there is nothing more obviously, and frequently violates them; nay, indeed the whole species of *real Friendships* seems to be extinct, since this *fictitious* sort took place. Men think it enough (as indeed 'tis too much) to damn themselves with their friends, and all other communications are transmuted into that of Sin, for we daily see those, who cleave the most inseparably in this kind to each other, will yet neither do nor suffer any thing else: And sure if this be *friendship*, 'tis such a reverse kind of it as must have as preposterous a *Definition*; for none that have yet been given by *Divines* or *Philosophers* will fit it. The like may be said of *hospitality*, which sure is in its proper nature of a very distant make from this; design'd to *relieve* Strangers, not *burthen* them; to cure their wants indeed, but not by the worse exchange of a Surfet: So that the *ancient* and the *modern Hospitality*, differ as much as that of *Melchizedeck* from that of *Circe*; the one refreshes, the other transforms: And how great a shew foe-  
 ver of liberality this later may have, yet he is not to be thought to have drunk *gratis*, that has paid his *reason* for his *shot*.

AND to both these parts of Intemperance, our Uncleanneſs bears full proportion, the one *makes provision for the flesh*, and the other *fulfils the lusts thereof*. To how brutish an impudence  
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this sin is grown is too visible: we need not trace men into their privacies and recesses, themselves willingly proclaim their guilts; nay, dread nothing so much as the opinion of being innocent: yea so out-dated a *vertue* is Modesty now become, that even that Sex to which it was once accounted the greatest ornament, have put it off, look on it as a piece of *Rusticity*, and *countrey breeding*: whether this pulling down the *fence* be an Indication they are willing to lie *common*, I shall not determine: but sure that very free, and confident behaviour now in use, is too apt to invite assaults, and takes off all that Extenuation of crime, which was wont to be allowed that Sex upon the supposition of their being seduced? Thus do we publish our sin as *Sodom*, and if we consider how much boldness it has gain'd since the return of our *prosperity*; twill be probable that ours also has been fomented by *fulness of bread*, and *abundance of Idleness*, Ez. i. 6. That our Plenty is very subservient to it, appears by the *vast expence* wherewith many men manage this vice: And that our Idleness is so too, is no less evident by the *large portions of time* that are spent in those pursuits, it being as the great design, so the especial business of too many mens lives. As for the *remedy* which God has assign'd, it serves now only to exasperate the *disease*. Marriage with too many only advances simple-fornication to adultery, and superadds perjury to uncleanness; those sacred bands are like *Samsons* withs, broken upon every assault of

the *Philistins*, and the very thought of being confin'd makes men more apt to range ; For alas, 'tis not their *needs* but their *Phancies* they are to provide for, and that is so endless, that the greatest liberty of *Polygamy* would never satisfy it: the same quarrel would lie then to multiplied wives, which does now to single ; I mean, that they were their own: And how numerous soever their *flock* were, 'twould not secure their poor neighbours only *Lamb*, especially when 'tis consider'd, that in this they gratify two sins at once, their *vanity* as well as their *lust* ; their complacency in *undermining* the Husband, being generally as great, as that in *enjoying* the Wife. And if *Pride* abstractedly and in its own nature be, as *Solomon* says, *an abomination to the Lord*, certainly when 'tis thus complicated, it must be infinitely more so, and ascertain a concurrence of those *Judgments*, which are singly threatned to each of those *Sins* ; what those are, I wish guilty persons would seriously ponder, and then they would surely think their momentary pleasures much overbought. But alas, such a fascinating sin this is, as allows men no liberty of consideration, they go on as the *wise-man* says, *Prov. 7. 22.* with the same stupidity that *an Ox goeth to the slaughter*: or, *a fool to the correction of the stocks* ; and while every body else observes the *Effects* of their Vice in their wasted *bodies*, and ruin'd *estates* ; themselves are the last that discern it, pursue the *course* till the very last remains of strength and wealth are exhausted, and nothing left them but

*disease*

*disease and beggary.* Of the truth of this, there have been too many sad examples, though it seems not yet enough, to give caution to others.

And to these *lusts of the flesh*, we spare not to add those of the *Eye* also, for so surely we may properly call all those *Luxuries* which adapt themselves peculiarly to that Faculty, such are the *gaity* of Apparel, *richness* of Furniture, and all the *splendor* of Equipage, which has no propriety to any other sense, but that of *seeing*, and is lost if it be not lookt on: And though these seem to differ much from that *Covetousness* which St. John is supposed to comprehend in that Phrase, the one being the *tenacity*, the other the *profusion* of Money; yet they are but several branches of the same Sin, and are diversified only by a various application to the *Object*: for in strict speaking, he that covets Gold and Silver to lay on his *back*, is as properly *covetous*, as he that designs it only to fill his *coffers*. But besides the propriety these *excesses* have to that title, they have no less claim to that ensuing, *The Pride of Life*; it being evident that they are both *Effects* and *Fomenters* of *Pride*: and sure this sets but an ill Character upon them, that when the *Apostle* has divided all the *lusts* of the world into *three sorts*, these bid so fair to *two* of them. I would not here be understood to condemn that *Decency* and moderate *Expende*, which agree to the several ranks and qualities of Persons, there being not only a *lawfulness*, but some kind of *civil necessity* for such *Distinctions*: nor is the levelling principle fitter to be admitted in



in Habit, than in Title or Estate : That which I accuse is quite another thing, it being that inordinate profusion which does not only exceed the ability and fortune of the Person, but the proportion of his rank and condition ; and so confounds that distinction it should preserve, and levels us the wrong way : it being more tolerable that all should be *Peasants*, than all *Lords*. And this is the irregularity that many seem to affect, there being not only an emulation of pomp and bravery among equals, but those of the most distant qualities, there seeming now no other measure than the utmost extent of their *money* or *credit* ; the later whereof is often so stretcht, that it not only cracks its self, but by an unhappy contagion, breaks those it deals with, and like a *Granado* tears Towns in pieces : The many ruin'd Families of *Tradesmen* do too sadly attest this ; would God our *Gallants* would consider how unequal it is, that many should want *necessary cloathing*, only to maintain the *superfluity* of theirs ; an Injustice which not only upon a *religious*, but *politick* account deserves the severest Reproof, and since *Divine* Laws will not restrain it, 'twere well if *Humane* were provided : though I confess, 'twere not easie to find out penalties to deter those whom the wants so usually attending these excesses will not discourage. This sort of *vanity* was once thought peculiar to *women*, and though I cannot say that the sexes have exchange'd faults, (because each still keeps its own, together with those of the other) yet 'tis evident they have communicated

municated them, and as the *women* of this Age have transcrib'd *masculine* Vices, so the *men* have *feminine*; this particularly, wherein they seem fully to answer the Copy, they being as Critically knowing in all the mysteries of vanity, and as diligent in reducing their *speculations* to *practice*, as any the most extravagant female. Indeed both the one and the other pursue this *folly* with so great an expence of Care, Time, and Money, as if to be fine and happy were the same thing, and their *bodies* had been design'd for their Cloaths, rather than their *cloaths* for their Bodies.

AND now when all these luxuries are to be serv'd, it had need be an exorbitant plenty that shall supply them; and that will unfold the riddle so frequent among us, of so many being poorer since they recovered their estates, than when they wanted them: Our *revenue* how large soever, is so clogg'd and encumber'd with our *vices*, that they moulder away, and only serve to carry other mens with them, by giving credit to run in debt. There are indeed no such unmerciful *exactors* as our own Lusts, the one gleans after the other, till they induce such a scarcity as the Prophet Joel describes 1. 4. *That which the Palmer-worm hath left, hath the Locust eaten, and that which the Locust hath left, hath the Canker-worm eaten, and that which the Canker-worm hath left, hath the Caterpillar eaten*: So that in effect we have only changed our oppressors, and are as much or more exhausted by our sins, as we were before by other mens; with this woful circumstance that now  
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we have the *guilts* as well as the *sufferings*: Thus do we rob our selves, and create *want* in the midst of all that *abundance* God has given us, using our plenty as the *Benjamites* did the *Levites* Concubine, *Judg.* 19. force and prostitute it till we destroy it; and the similitude holds in this also, that what we thus violate is not our own; for let us phancy what we will, certainly our *superfluities* are more the *poors* Right than *ours*, assign'd to them by God the grand Proprietor. So that our Excesses have besides their proper *guilt*, that of *injustice* superadded; and when the cry of the *poor* shall be joyn'd to those of our riots, they will certainly be too clamorous to let vengeance any longer sleep.

THIS is the account we can give of our *plenty*, and that of our *liberty* is not much better; 'tis not long since that *arbitrary tyranny* expir'd, which gave us no other *measures* of our duties or punishments, than the *will* or *avarice* of the Imposers: And then how did we gasp to be under the conduct and Protection of *known determinate Laws*? Yet now we have them, who considers them, or is regulated by them? Between the *licentiousness* of Inferiors, and the *remisness* of Superiors, they are rendred things only of *form*, not *use*; for while the one violates, and the other connives, what can they signifie, and though there be never so many *new* Laws made to assert the *old*, yet we see they serve for little but to partake of the same contempt with the others, and are but like the *Ghimeras* of an *Utopian State*, sagely

ly contriv'd, but to no purpose. 'Tis the Execution of Laws that gives them a real and effective being, and without that, amidst our great volumes we are yet destitute, and may too probably experiment the truth of that *Axiome*, that *'tis better to live where nothing is lawful, than where all things are.* Indeed if we remember how the Statutes of *Omri* were kept, with what a tameness the severest Impositions of the late *Usurpers* were submitted to, we have reason to think *coercion* is the surest Principle of *vulgar obedience*; though withal it sets but an ill mark upon us, who know so much better how to be *slaves* than *subjects*. And as we are restor'd to our *civil Liberty*, so as a branch or consequent of that, we are to our *personal* also: We were lately in the condition Christ foretold to *St. Peter*, carried by others whither we would not, *Jo. 21. 18.* but now we gird our selves and go whither we will; and alas, what use do many of us make of this *freedom*? Is it not visible, that neither our publick or private affairs are the better attended: But on the contrary we are in a restless pursuit of impertinent or vicious *pastimes*, go pilgrimages to our *pleasures*, wander about from this sport, that meeting to another, till many of us forget we have any other concerns in the world, and are as much strangers to our own homes, as when we were forcibly detain'd thence: And for such I know not whether the former restraint be not eligible, to be a *prisoner* being a kind of rescue to him, that would otherwise be a *vagrant*.

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THESE are the *uses* we make of those *advantages* whereof God has repossess'd us. I know 'tis too envious a task to distribute these accusations to every Rank and Order of men among us; I have here given them in the lump, and wish that not only such *degrees*, but each *person* would adapt to himself his *peculiar share*, wherein contrary to other *dividends*, I fear the only Immodesty and Injustice too will generally be, for every one not to carve liberally for himself. However, 'tis sure in the gross they make up the *Character* of a most barbarously *ungrateful Nation*. God was pleas'd to return our *peace*, before we had forsaken our *sins*, as if he meant to try our ingenuity; that we who had been so much worse than beasts under the former method, that no stripes would discipline us, might have this advantage to redeem our credit, and be drawn with these cords of a man: but we have put off not only *piety* but *humanity*, and are equally untractable to all methods. And now who can refrain from *Moses's* *passionate Apostrophe*, *Do ye thus requite the Lord O foolish people and unwise, Deut. 32. 6.* Unwise indeed, that from the most benigne *purposes* of God, extract nothing but our own *mischief*: are the poorer for his Liberalities, and the worse for his Goodness; by a preposterous use so wear out our Blessings, that they cease to be, at least to be *Blessings*: And if they once fall from that, there is no middle form for them to assume, they convert into the direct contrary, and become the fatallest *Curses*, more heavy than those which  
were

were originally design'd as such; that degeneration adding malignity, and no *Fury* being so extreme, as that which bottoms upon repell'd and irritated *Love*. Gods *mercies* are like those *pictures*, which according to the different position of the beholder, carry different Representations, if we will still stand on the wrong side, and not take them in their more *amiable* appearance, we shall find they can put on a *dreadful*: his Goodness will not be finally unoperative, if we will not permit it to lead us to *repentance*, 'twill drive us to *destruction*. I am sure we have all reason to expect he should exert his power as eminently against us, as he has done for us, unless perhaps he sees that is not necessary to our ruine, for indeed let him but stand by and not interpose his omnipotence for us, he may trust us to be his *Executioners*, our Vices having a *natural* as well as *moral* Efficacy to destroy us. And who knows whether that be not the reason of his seeming connivance, that he forbears to strike us, to give us up to those more fatal wounds we inflict on our selves; this alas we have too much cause to fear, for 'tis sure 'tis not our *innocence* that gives us Impunity, but 'tis more than probable 'tis our *incorrigibleness*; that God gives us over with a *why should ye be smitten any more?* Will not prostitute his Judgments, but as the basest of *Malefactors* leave us to the basest of *Executioners*, and let our iniquities become our ruine. This as it is the severest purpose God can entertain towards us, so 'tis our most important concern to avert. And

O that we, who have so perversly resisted all the designs of his *love*, would now try to defeat that of his *anger*, rob him of those intestine avengers within our own breasts, those *fleshy lusts which fight against the Soul*, 1 Pet. 2. 10. which do not only provoke, but execute his *Wrath*, and make us more miserable than *Hell* its self could do without them; and God knows 'tis more than time for us, to seek an escape from so *formidable mischiefs*: O let us not contract one minutes delay, let us cast our selves at the feet of our offended God, and as those who are condemn'd to disgraceful Executions, use to petition for some death of less Infamy, as a *boon* and *favour*, so let us beg, that he will please to think us worth his *own correction*; that whatsoever we suffer from his hand, yet that we may not ( like to *Herod* ) be deliver'd up to the loathsome fortune of being devour'd by our own putrefaction. In a word, let us form *Dauids choice* into an importunate prayer, and earnestly beg that we may *fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of men*, at least not of our selves, who are more to be dreaded than all our other *Enemies*.

INDEED till we do thus, our prosperities are far from real, and do in this justify our most mutinous repinings, that we are never the better for them, nay, much the worse, yet since 'tis only we that have enervated them, they will stand upon our account in their proper weight and value: When our *receipts* are summed up, God will charge us with them, not as those empty *useless things*



*things* we have made them, but as those great and *solid blessings* he intended them. And certainly this is most deplorable ill managery; to reserve nothing to our selves but the *burthen* and *account* of our good things; to enjoy nothing, and yet be answerable for all. In secular things men usually pay with some regret, for those things of which they have only anticipated the *use*: But with what dismal reluctancies shall we come to pay for these, of which we have made no *advantage*, and must therefore pay the dearer because we have not; it being not so much the things, as our employing of them to our benefit, whereof God will exact account. His *anger* is then only incens'd, when we resist his *love*; and his only quarrel to us is, for frustrating his design of making us happy. And sure those well deserve his wrath, that will provoke it on such terms; yet so perverse is the *choice*, as of all sinners in general, so especially of *this Nation* at this time, who have all before us which might make us happy in both worlds, if we did not Madly affect to be so in neither, God grant we may recover the Sobriety to make *wiser elections*, before it be out of our power to make any, and we be found to stand to the mischiefs of our own wild Option.

THE Reader will perhaps think, I have gone beyond the limits of a moderate digression, but the too great *copiousness* of the Theme, must be my *excuse*: such overgrown Vices cannot well be drawn in little, and where there is such a multitude, the most superficial view of Each, is rather

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proportional to a *distinct Tract*, than to the *few Pages* it has borrowed in this. My greater fear is, that the event may prove it impertinent, there being not much hope that a *private whisper* shall be heard by those, who are deaf to the *loudest calls* of Heaven, and have made no other *use* of those various and signal Providences we have been under, than to defeat the *design* of them.

## CHAP. IX.

*A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Disputes in general.*

**T**H E S E are some of those many artifices, whereby Satan like a cunning *Pick-lock*, slyly robs us of our grand *treasure*, the power and efficacy of our Christianity, and leaves us only the empty *Casket*, the name and formal Profession, that which serves only to make us *proud*, not *rich*, *confident*, not *safe*: And God knows, so many are daily thus befool'd by him, so many fall as preys to these his *Stratagems*, as might, one would think, glut the eagerest malice, and supersede all farther designs: but so insatiate is this grand Devourer, that *retail-prizes*, though never so frequent, do rather enrage than satisfy his *appetite*: He is Enemy not only to this or that man, but to *mankind* in gross, and therefore as if he fear'd that even his malice might not prove indefatigable

defatigable enough for so many distinct pursuits, he contrives more compendious methods of destruction: Frames such *Engines* as take off whole ranks, nay, troops; compounds such active *Poyson*, as like a Pestilence, kills multitudes at once. It is too trivial a Mischief to annoy the *outward parts*, it is his Mastery to spread an unseen venom in the *Bowels*, thence to diffuse its self through't, mix with the vital spirit, and convert that *kindly heat* which should animate, into those wild *irregular flames* which ravine and consume. And this is done, by that Pestilential spirit of *division*, that heat of *disputation*, which has for so many ages possess'd and wasted the *Catholick Church*; and by an unhappy kind of Magick transform'd the zeal of Christian *practice*, into an itch of unchristian *Dispute*; made the *questions* about our *Creed* more numerous than the *letters* of it; and by multitudes and contrariety of *Paraphrases* so confounded and obscur'd the *Text*, that what was anciently the badge and *tessera* of Christian Communion, serves us for no other purpose but as an occasion of breaking it.

SO long as the Church retain'd the *simplicity* of Christian doctrine, lookt on her *faith* as the Foundation of her *obedience*, and endeavour'd to propagate to her Children such an understanding of the one, as was most apt to promote the other; She happily made good the title *Christ* gives her, *Gen. 6.* of his *love*, his *dove*, his *undefil'd* one: but when the *Serpent* had once got into this *Paradise*, infus'd his *subtillties*, and nice intricacies

into mens Brains ; and least that should not be ruinous enough, his *venome* also into their Hearts : Then began all those unhappy *Metamorphoses*, in comparison of which, those of the Poets are as *trivial* as they are *Fabulous* : then that *faith* which was once inseparably joyn'd with the *patience* of the Saints, forsook that tame company, and linkt its self with the most contrary qualities of *wrath* and *bitterness* ; and those whose Profession it was to *resist* unto blood, striving against sin, *pursued* to blood those that resisted them in any of their speculations : Then that passive Valour which had rendred them so venerable to their Heathen Enemies, converted some, tired out others, and amaz'd all ; sadly degenerated into that active malice, which from *persecuted Christians*, entituled them to that monstrous style of *Christian persecutors*. And that *ardent love*, which had offered up so many *Holocaults* to God, was supplanted by that *fiery hatred*, that made no less acceptable oblations to Satan.

THIS miserable and destructive *change* was so much the interest of the Enemy of Souls, that we cannot wonder he should so studiously promote it ; and indeed never did he at once so approve his *malice* and *subtilty*, I would I could not say success also, as in this *design* ; in comparison whereof, all his other Projects speak him but a Puny, this is his one *Goliath Stratagem* which has serv'd him not only to *desie*, but even *defeat the Armies of the living God*.

NOR is his Sagacity more observable in the  
choice

choice, and main drift of the Design, than in the ways of Effecting it; had he brought into the *Primitive Church* those large scrolls of disputable points, wherewith he has fill'd the Modern; that more charitable Age must needs have startled and discern'd, that that *seeming Jealousie* for Truth, was indeed nothing but a *real design* against Peace, and would surely never have parted with that sacred *depositum*, that precious legacy so lately bequeath'd by Christ, for those vain janglings, those School subtilties which now entertain the world. But as he that would divert a man from the *guard* of some important Treasure, alarms him in some other of his greatest *interests*; so he at first raises up *Heresies* of the greatest magnitude, whose blasphemous consequences so shook the whole Fabrick of Religion, that what was *Uzzahs* Rashness seemed then every mans advised Duty, to *put his hand to the upholding of the tottering Ark*. How could those who had been baptiz'd into the faith of the Blessed Trinity, suffer the *Arians* to rob them of the Second Person, the *Macedonians* of the Third, the *Valentinians* and *Manichees* so to despise the First, as to set up against him a Rival principle of being: How could those who had so solemnly renounc'd the World, the Flesh and the Devil, see them all bowed to by the temporizing, unclean, idolatrous *Gnosticks*? these were such invasions as seemed to commissionate all that could wield the sword of the Spirit to take it up, and engage in this Warfare. But all this while 'twas a sad *Di-*

*lemma* to which the Church was driven ; if she gave countenance to these *seducers*, she betrayed her *faith* ; if she entered the *contest* she violated her *unity* ; the one would undermine her *foundation*, the other would make a breach in her *walls*.

AND the Devil was too old an Artist to lose the *advantage*, he knew well that even a just and necessary *defence*, does by giving men acquaintance with War take off somewhat from the abhorrence of it, and insensibly dispose them to farther *Hostilities*, and therefore he fail'd not to provide *sparks* for that matter, which was now grown so combustible ; nor did he always send them from the *bottomless pit*, but sometimes borrowed fire from the *Altar* to consume the Votaries, and by the mutual collision of well meant *zeal* set even Orthodox Christian in *flame*. A memorable instance of this was the *dispute about Easter*, wherein while the veneration they had of the glorious Resurrection of *Christ*, prompted them to commemorate it in the exactest manner they could, the *Serpent* creeps into this Paradise, and though they had the same common end, yet on occasion of some little dissenting in the way, the heat of *devotion* insensibly degenerated into that of *contention* ; and by being very tenacious of a circumstance of that *celebration*, they lost the more essential requisite that of *Charity* : kept the Feast indeed, but with the leaven of malice, and absurdly commemorate the reintegration of his *Natural Body*, by mutilating and dividing his *Mystical*. So likewise in the business of Rebaptization,

on, while one side in a pious abhorrence of *Here-  
sie*, thought the stain like that of Original Sin  
could not be done away by any Purgation less so-  
lemn than that of Baptism, and the other in a just  
reverence of ancient *custom*, and jealousy of *inno-  
vation* opposed it: the Dispute lasted till the  
Scene was changed, and those who deliberated of  
the manner of *receiving* Hereticks into the  
Church, were themselves as such *turn'd* out of it.  
No less well meant were the *Originals* of the *No-  
vatian* and *Donatist* Heresies, as equally unhappy  
were their *issues*: For in them all, when bitter  
*Zeal* was once fermented, through its aptitude  
to receive, and the Devils vigilance to administer  
occasions, the *Orthodoxy* or *Heretic* of lives soon  
became terms out-dated, and men were measur'd  
only by *opinions*: That *sword of the spirit* which  
was at first design'd against vicious practices had  
its edge turn'd against *speculative* notions, in so  
much, that at last like that of *Joab*, 2 *Sam.* 28.8.  
it had got such an aptness to fall out, that it was  
always a ready instrument of Execution, till  
even a Philosophical point, as that of the *Antipo-  
des* was resolv'd with an *Anathema*, and not to  
know the Systeme of this *present* World, made  
forfeiture of that *to come*.

BUT alas these, though great defections  
from Primitive unity, were but modest essays,  
and feeble assaults, compar'd with those which  
infested the succeeding ages: This *root of bitter-  
ness* was then but a *probationer* in the soyle, and  
though it sent forth some offshoots to preserve its



kind; yet *Satan* was fain to be at some pains to cherish and nurse them up, placed them under the shadow of the *Sanctuary*, and got them like the treacherous Ivy, supported by that *piety* they were designed to destroy; but it was not long ere they had got firmer rooting and strength, not only to propagate, but multiply. Every Dispute in Religion grew *prolifical*, and in ventilating one question, many new ones were started: And as *questions* grew numerous, so did *Sects* too; every Opinion almost constituted a new party, and those again subdivided into many others, so that of all the first Violators of Primitive unity, we scarce find any, who did not revenge their *Schism* upon themselves, by separating from one another, as they had all done from the *Church*; till at last the progeny both of *Sects* and *Opinions* grew so numerous, that he who would exact an account, must be sent like *Abraham*, to the Sky or to the Shore: The Stars or Sands, being as apt a subject of *Arithmetick* as they. Whence it is brought to pass, that *Satan* now may leave his toilsome labour of compassing the Earth; men do his business for him, giving him leisure to be only a Cheerful *Spectator* of their *Divinity-prizes*; the bloody combates of *Ecclesiastick Gladiators*.

AND that he may be secur'd never to want that pleasing divertisement, the *later Ages* have been careful to train him up *Combatants*, it being now become a distinct sort of Learning, a new Species

Species of Divinity, to raise nice *questions*, create new *difficulties*, branch out with fond *distinctions* our holy Faith, which the pious Simplicity of the first Christians, receiv'd to practice; not to read upon as an *Anatomy*, unbowel and dissect to try experiments, much less to bring into the *Theatre*, there made to fight and bleed, to shew men sport, and try the skill of the unhappy sword-men, and Masters of defence. *The form of sound words*, which in its native frame and constitution, was most enlivening and Salubrious, dissolv'd and melted by *Chimical preparation*, ceases to be nutritive; and after all the labours of the *Alembeck*, and hopes of an *Elixir*, insensibly evaporates, and vanishes to Air; or leaves in the recipient a foul *Empyreuma*, or fretting corrosive. An endless dotage about names and words, and then as endless quarrel for them; appearing the commensurate *effect* of the long studies of those *Distillers* in Divinity, who boast its Sublimation.

IT is indeed a thing worthy of the greatest both wonder and lamentation to see how the plainest, and most *simple proposition*, when it falls into the hands of these *Artists*, is mangled and disjointed, is rarified, exalted, and refin'd: He whose leisure, or indeed whole life, would serve him to survey all the subtle Divisions, and Distinctions of the *School-men*, would sure resolve, they had the power of working *Miracles*. *Questions* in their hands multiplying in the breaking, like the *loaves* in our *Saviours*. But sure the event of the  
Miracles

Miracles are very desperate, no solid nourishment being deriv'd by the one, but on the contrary, Stones given us in stead of Bread, and those too for the worst purposes, even to sling at one another, as if because *stoning* was the death of the first Christian *Martyr*, we design'd his *Charity* to the same fate with himself; that *divine Gospel* grace having since faln under as thick a shower, and with this sharp aggravation too, that whereas he suffered from *Jews*, *Christians* are become its *executioners*: whilst those who pretend to be *Champions* of the Faith, *Irrefragable*, *Angelical*, and *Seraphical Doctors*, not only fill the Church with quarrels whilst they live, but bequeath them in their writings to posterity; as *Zisca* is said to have done his skin, to be made an Incentive to war and confusion.

IT was the policy of *Julian* to shut up the Fountains of humane learning from the Christian youth, lest they should there gain such acuteness, as might render them the more formidable Adversaries to *Paganism*: but could he have foreseen that they would have employed those Weapons not against the common Enemy, but one another, he would surely have revers'd the Stratagem, freely opened those *Magazees* whence they might furnish themselves for their mutual ruine, and have as solicitously promoted their Learning, as ever he obstructed it. I am very far from abetting their arrogant folly, who either decry humane learning in general, or make it such a *Moabite*, or *Ammonite*, that however it be admitted in civil

*vil Converse*, must be interdicted the *Sanctuary*. Our Religion prescribes us rational not brutish Sacrifices, and therefore despises not any of those *advantages* which may improve our reason, exalt the *man* and depress the *beast* in us: yet sure we shall derogate very impiously from Christs propheticke office, if we allow not divinity to be the Supreme and noblest Science; such as is to be serv'd and attended, not regulated and govern'd by those inferior: but that just order seems now to be inverted; *divine* learning is brought down to *humane*; the *Simplicity* of Christian doctrine so perplext and confounded with *Philosophical nicities*, that *Plato* and *Aristotle* are become the *Umpires* of our Religion, and we must go ask *Heathens* how far we shall be *Christians*. Those deep things of God as the *Apostle* calls them 1 Cor. 2. 10. and of which he pronounces the natural man an incompetent Judge, are yet brought before that *Tribunal*, subjected to be scanned by rules of Art: but alas, our line is too short to sound those Depths. Men rashly undertake to understand *incomprehensible*, to order *infinite*, define *ineffable* things: and then no wonder if their conceptions differ; for where there is no visible truth, wherein to Center, error is as wide as mens *Phancies*, and may wander to Eternity: while multitudes run cariers in the dark, it is not strange to have them jostle, and overthrow each other.

AND doubtless were the *Controversies* which have so long harraased the Church throughly examin'd

min'd, many of them would be found of this nature. An *humble belief* has been judg'd too sluggish and dull an exercise for men of acute parts, and therefore they would not take *faith's word* that so it is, unless *reason* will be her *surety*, and shew them how; but sure it had been much for the *peace* of the Church and *safety* of Souls, if Mysteries had been permitted to be *Mysteries*; that those sublimer parts of our *faith* had been entertain'd with more veneration, and less of *disquisition*, and that while even the learned'st do acknowledge them to be *Abysses*, they would not confute that confession, by attempting to *fathom* them. But alas, so preposterous has been the procedure, that those things which were indeed inexplicable, have been rackt and tortur'd to discover themselves, while in the mean, the plainer, and more accessible *truths*, as if despicable while easie, are clouded and obscur'd; so many subtile *queries* rais'd about them, that the *Theorick* of Christianity is become harder than the *Practick*; a grace is much more readily acquir'd than defin'd, and that *key of knowledge* which should give us entrance into the closets and recesses of religion, is by so much tampering and wrenching made *useless*; serves only to busie us at the door, and so in effect proves rather a *bar to keep us out*, than a *key to let us in*. Thus perverse are the *contradictions* of humane deprav'd nature, which like our *first parents* take it unkindly, that God has reserv'd any thing from us, and boldly attempt to break down

down his *enclosures*, to rob him of his *peculiar*; and yet in the mean, as industriously contrive to rob our selves of our own, to cancelling both parts of Gods distribution, neither leaving *secret things to the Lord our God*, nor *the revealed ones to us and our children*, Deut. 29. 29. Certainly the first propagators of our Faith, proceeded at another rate, they well knew that not the *brain* but the *heart*, was the proper *soil* for that celestial Plant, and therefore did not amuse their *Profelytes* with curious questions, but set them to the active part of their religion. We see what brief and plain instructions S. Peter gives his *Catechumeni*, Act. 2. 38. *Repent and be baptiz'd every one of you for the remission of sins*: and this it seems as a full preparation for the gift of the Holy Ghost, which he there promises upon these only conditions. This was that vigorous Seed which at once *sprung up* suddenly, and *rooted deep* too, and produc'd the liberal harvest of that day: but sure had those three thousand souls, been Catechiz'd by our modern *Casuists*, we had seen a wide difference, not only in the expedition but success. In like manner we see Act. 8. how short a Creed qualified in S. *Philips* judgment for the Eunuchs baptism: and we find S. *Paul* whose education enabled him for the subtlest definitions, yet delivers his whole doctrine in this *compendium*, Act. 20. 21. *Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*; and 'tis observable how he introduces this with a profession that *he had kept back nothing*

*nothing that was profitable for them, Verſ. 20. and ſeconds it V. 27. with another, that he had not ſhunned to declare unto them the whole council of God; from whence 'tis obvious for the ſhalloweſt diſcourſer to infer, that the whole council of God as far as it is incumbent for man to know, at leaſt neceſſitate medii is compriz'd in that one breviat of Evangelical truth: and certainly whileſt all the deviſion of theſe generals, was the diſtributing them into practice, they were found moſt fertile ſeminaries of all Vertue; but when they came to be dichotomiz'd, and cantond out into curious aerial notions, they loſt their proliſick nature: that fruitful land became a wilderneſs, a wild and intricate maze, where men ſooner loſe themſelves than find either truth or holineſs.*

WHEN Chriſtianity firſt attesteſt its ſelf by *miracles*, it produced in the hearts of its converts, a firm aſſent to the truth of the *Doctrines*, and an awful reverence and adoration of *that God*, who had given ſuch power unto men, awaking them to an Enquiry after *duty*, ſo to propitiate that *omnipotence* whoſe Fury it appear'd impoſſible to bear: And this ſure was a much more *genuine effect*, than if they had buſied themſelves in thoſe many *unprofitable curioſities*, nice, yet bold enquiries into the divine attributes which now a-daies ſerve only to ſupplant that pious veneration we owe to them.

IN like manner the comprehensive enunciation of Chriſt, *Mar. 16. 16. He that believeth*  
*ſhall*



*shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damn'd,* was received by the first Christians, as the condition on which the two so distant states of Salvation or damnation depended, and accordingly excited their diligence, to attain the one, and avoid the other. And this certainly was a much more concerning employment, than to have entertain'd themselves with the modern dispute, whether some antecedent decree of God had not irreversibly determin'd them, to the one or other; a *disquisition* that has serv'd only to keep us *Idly busie*, set our heads a working, but folds up our *hands* like *Solomon's* sluggard in our bosoms. So also when *S. Paul* affirms it the design of *Christs* giving himself for us, to purifie to himself a *peculiar people, zealous of good works*; the *Primitive* Christians had no other design than to comport with that his purpose; to be what he died to make them, and to attest their *Zeal* to good works, by being actually *rich* in them. They took *Christ's* word, that *he that gave the meanest dole for his sake, should not lose his reward*; thought themselves sure enough upon his promise, and never disputed the proportion either of Worth or Congruity between the work and wages; and had the *Modern* done the like, our *works* had not so unhappily evaporated into words, we had talkt less and done more.

T W E R E easie to draw the Parallel through all the points which busied the devotion of the *first* Ages, and the curiosity of the *later*: By all which it would be evident, how much Christian

stian doctrine has *lost* in its Efficacy, since it *gain'd* in its Bulk: how we have embased our *Goin* by multiplying it; and have divided our *sum* into so many, and so small *Fractions*, as our *Arithmetick* can scarce *number*, never *unite*. We should think him very ridiculous, that should hope to advance his *crop*, by grinding the *corn* he sows: yet methinks, this has bin the Method of our Spiritual husbandmen, who have scarce suffered one grain of our faith to scape *Entire*. 'Tis said that the *Ant*, when she lays in her winter stock, bites the ends of the *Corn*, as being *Naturalist* enough to know that will certainly prevent its sprouting: And sure that little contemptible creature whom *Solomon* appoints to preach *industry* to the *sluggard*, may in this point read *Philosophy* too, to our greatest *Doctors*; convince them that that seed which they mangle with so many *Distinctions* and *Divisions*, will never spring up into *Christian practice*: It will rather be like the *Dragons* teeth, *Cadmus* is said to have sown, whose immediate production was a *hostile band* combating one another. A *fable* which God knows we have found too sadly *moraliz'd* in our School contentions, only with this unhappy difference, that ours are more *immortal*, our *Serpentine* breed fight but never die, oppose but destroy not one another.

AND then 'twill not appear strange to see the first seeds of discord, so prodigiously *encreas'd*, that they now overspread the face of the Earth: for whereas in all other things there

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is a succession, one generation goes and another comes; and so though the *species* continue, the *Individuals* perish; these seem to have the accurs'd Privilege of propagating and not expiring, and to have reconcil'd the procreativeness of *corporeal*, with the duration of *incorporeal* Substances: This is such an advantage toward their *multiplication*, that we may grieve, but cannot wonder to find them *Swarm*; not like *Bees* to bring profit, but like *Locusts* to devour every green thing in the land; nor is it now in the power of all the *Magicians of Egypt* to cast them out: for were it possible ever to become *Satan's* interest to suppress them, he would certainly find himself in the case of one of his young *Conjurors*, to have *rais'd* more spirits than he could *lay*. Mens now *irritated Passions*, and formed interests, the great fomenters of disputes, would prove too *sturdy Devils*, even for *Beelzebub* himself to Exorcise.

BUT 'tis too sure his Kingdom will never so divide against its self; it suits not only with his *Nature*, but with his *Ends* to perpetuate our Strifes, and therefore as if our doctrinal debates were not enough to secure his purpose, he has an auxiliary troop of ritual differences to attach us. The *Leprosie* which infects the sollider parts of our Religion, has past from the *body* to the very *Garments*; the most exterior *adherencies*, Habits, Gestures, Days, every thing that has but the remotest subserviency to Piety, are become the *objects* of fierce Contests, and have so

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increas'd the number and heat of our quarrels, that 'tis unnecessary, perhaps impossible to add more if he can but keep up these, as God knows he is too like to do, his Kingdom will be competently guarded, they being his greatest security against that power of Godliness, that vital force of Christianity, he so much dreads: that they are so, is obvious enough to him that takes but the grossest confus'd view of them. But that we may better discern the degrees of his advantage and our own mischief, 'twill not be amiss to consider them more attentively, make some distinct observations, not of *all*, for that were endless, but of *some* of their most eminent *Effects*, which we shall find so pernicious and destructive, as sufficiently speak their relation, and subserviency to the great *Abaddon*.

AND in the first place if we consider them only *privatively* as they supplant and jostle out our greater concerns, we shall find them sadly mischievous, indeed to such a degree that were they not chargeable with any *positive* Ill, they were by this their meer *negative* Force, competent Instruments of our *ruine*. Did they actually convey no venome, yet while they subtract our nourishment, their effects will be sure to be deadly; *Grace* as well as *Nature* being liable to be starv'd as well as poysoned, *Christianity* is not a dull unactive, but stirring busie State, and therefore we still find it in the *Gospel* represented under the *Metaphors* which imply the greatest Industry and Activity; tis a *trade*, a *watch*,

*watch, a race, a combat*, and it assigns us tasks enough to justify the propriety of the *Tropes*: And therefore as on the one hand the sleepy Professor will at last find he has but dreamt of those glorious Rewards he expects; so on the other, he that frames himself another *Scheme*, that labours but not in Gods vineyard, that busies himself in things extrinsick to that one great *Sphere of motion* the Evangelical Precepts, will finally discern that he has but rolled *Sisyphus* his stone, espous'd a *toyle* under which he may indeed be *weary* and *heavy laden*, but will never find *rest* to his Soul.

AND then what can be more perfectly adapted to his aim, who desires to propagate his own eternal restlessness unto us, than thus to commute our tasks, exchange these *pleasant* and *gainful ones*, which God assigns us, for those *uneasy* and *fruitless*, we impose on our selves. 'Tis true we find too many of those unprofitable works of darkness to busie and employ us: but I think no one, nay I am apt to say not all others together, have proved so effectual to his purpose, as this of raising and maintaining *parties in Religion*. 'Tis too usual a policy of States to secure themselves from the *fear* of a potent Neighbour, by fomenting a civil *discord* in his Kingdom: *Satan* has in this instance found it a lucky *Stratagem*, it having proved the most powerful *revulsive* of his danger. I will not examine, whether he borrowed it from, or lent it to our *Machavilians*, but sure he may from his

own experience recommend it with the attestation of a *Probatum est*.

INDEED this art of diversion gives him a full security against all he fears in our Christianity, for 'tis not the title he envies to us, or dreads himself; we know he long since had courage to condemn the name even of Christ, when invoked by those whose practices joyn'd with him in defying it; while we are but *Jewish Exorcists*, make no other use of Christ, but to get us a reputation and a trade, he can deal well enough with us. *Seven sons of Sceva* are not half so terrible to him as *one St. Paul*, 'tis him only he fears, that to the form has joyn'd the power of *Godliness*: That *Exorcisme* he knows he cannot resist, and therefore has very dexterously found a way to divert it, by engaging us in those contentions which allow us not to think of the practical part of our profession. By the *confus'd noise* of Battel, quite drowning that voice behind us, which says, *This is the way walk in it*. Nay, by this subtilty he does not only divert, but forestall also; like the *Philistines*, allows no Spear or Sword that may be us'd against him, but takes up all those Instruments by which we should work the work of God. We know to all affairs of Importance there are three necessary *concurrents* without which they can never be dispatcht; *Time, Industry, and Faculties*; and the more weighty and difficult the Business is, the greater Degree of each of these is requisite. Now certainly the *interest* of our Souls is not the slightest concern we have: the avoiding  
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eternal misery, the acquiring endless *bliss* is not so trivial, or so easie a matter, as to be the Work of a *moment*, the purchase of some few yawning wishes, or volatile phancies: He who is to dispense the Rewards, has propos'd us other Conditions, assign'd us Work which takes up no less time than that of our whole lives; no less intention than of our whole powers: And then if we suffer any thing else to interpose, and default what is thus entirely requisite, if we cut new Channels for that which should run in this one full current, 'tis easie to divine what the Event will be: For man being finite both in his nature and operations, the time and attention he bestows on one thing, must necessarily be subtracted from another. And therefore if our Disputes about Religion entertain and busie us, they must unavoidably interrupt our attendance on practick Duties; and so whilst we quarrel with one another, give our great Master too just ground of quarrel with us all, by neglecting the great, and indeed only Business entrusted to us.

NOW indeed that our contentions do thus divert us, is too apparent to any that shall consider it in any of the three forementioned particulars; for, first for our *time*, they do not only insensibly steal away much of it (a modesty which most other diversions do still retain) but Magisterially exact it, and accordingly have large parcels of it solemnly and avowedly devoted to them; the scanning old questions; and raising new ones, having been the profest Business of many mens lives;



their very Vocation and Trade wherein they have arrived to such *eminence*, as shews they made *liberal oblations* of their Time to it: And of this every age has left so many Records, as the meer reading them would allow few vacant minutes to the succeeding: And had not *time* a little reveng'd his own quarrel, and consum'd many of those *writings*, by which himself was wasted, the *Hyperbole* would not be very extravagant in this case, which we find warrantably us'd in another, *Jo. 21.* that even *the world its self could not contain the Books which have been written.* As it is, there are more than enough to employ, nay, devour time; for when men once launch into the vast *Sea* of Controversie, they are tossed there endlessly, and seldom recover a *harbour*, Difficulties like *waves* crowding one upon the neck of another; And accordingly we see in *Polemick Disputes*, how every rejoinder swells bigger and bigger, till like *Gehazies* cloud, from a *hand breadth* it over-spread the *Heavens*; every little Manual becomes the Parent of vast Volumes; and unless the evil cure its self by majoration, unless the greatness of the task bring in despair to supplant curiosity, and keep men from reading, the *spectators* will have as little respite, as the *Combatants*, both Writers and Readers will be so ingross'd, that they will have little leisure for any thing else. And I dare in this appeal to any that have engag'd deep either way, whether they have not found it experimentally true: I wish they would but snatch some broken parcel as a *plank* from the common *ship-wrack*

wrack of their time; rescue a few minutes for a sober reflection, and audit what real Profit accrues to them, from the expence of so many precious Hours; how much it advances that grand business for which their Time *here* was allotted, and according to which their Eternity *hereafter* will be awarded: always remembering, that if it promote it not, it hinders it, by diverting that time which should have been so employed: And indeed there cannot be a more comprehensive mischief than this of the *loss of time*, it being that which virtually contains the frustrating of all other Advantages, whereby we should work out our Salvation. The operations even of *Christ* himself were, he tells us, limited to a certain season: *I must work the work of my Father whilest it is day, the night cometh when no man can work*; and if the Night overtake us, it matters not how we are stored with instruments of Action, since they all at once then become useless. Our Laws anciently set a greater penalty upon the stealing *Beasts of breed*, than on other Cattel of the *same species*, as calculating the damage by the possibilities of which the Owner was robb'd. Time is the *universal womb* of things and actions; and therefore when we lose *that*, we suffer an accumulative prejudice, forfeit our *Rights in reversion* as well as our *Possessions*, our *capacities* as well as *enjoyments*. As in an Abortion the unhappy Mother, besides the frustration of her hopes, and child-birth pains sustain'd, acquires an aptitude to miscarry for the future, and never to be able to

bring forth a vital birth: And thus God knows multitudes of *Embryon* purposes perish, and the misery of it is, they are our best that do so. We generally pursue our *frivolous projects* with an *active vigour*, but keep our great and concerning *affairs* only in design till *death* come and surprize us, which like the *fatal Metamorphoses* the Poets talk of, fixes us in the posture it finds us, and so presents us to *Judgment*. Now I would know of the most eager Contender, whether he would not chuse then to be found with his hands stretcht out in *prayer* to God, or *alms* to the poor, rather than dealing *blows* amongst his fellow servants; if he would, certainly 'tis his concern to put himself into that form he would then appear in, to husband his little span of time so, as may stand him in stead when time shall be no more.

BUT if men will needs be *improvident*, yet why will they be *ridiculous* too, if they will barter away their time, methinks they should at least have some ease in exchange: but to be industrious ill-husbands, to lose all their *advantage*, and none of their *toil*, is such a solemn piece of folly, as is at once matter of Scorn and Wonder; yet this is the very case here, our *wranglings* do not only exhaust our *time*, but our *strength* too: We pursue them with so vehement an intention, as if our Faith propos'd not to us any other victory, but over this sort of Opponents; We run our selves breathless in this *race*, where the *prize* is only a few *fading Leaves*, or what is more transitory, a little *popular applause*; and make not to-

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wards the incorruptible Crown, till we are grown too feeble and decrepit for the other pursuit. Men macerate their Bodies, and waste their Spirits in *Polemick studies*, prescribe themselves no time of discharge from that *War*, till they are able no longer to wield their *weapons*, and then when meer Impotence makes them *peaceable*, begin to cry out of *contention*, snatch up *Devotion* when Controversie begins to be too heavy for them, and at their Death *pray for that peace* of the Church, which they have made it the business of their life to *disturb*. This as it sufficiently attests what mens thoughts are in their cool blood, what apprehensions they have of the way when they draw near their journeys End; so does it abundantly evince the unspeakable prejudice, Piety receives from our Disputes; Those have the active and *vigorous Abettors*, while That is turn'd off to languishing *bed-rid Votaries*. So that the *division* between these two, is like that of the *Cattel* between *Jacob and Laban*, all the stronger to the one, and feebler to the other: Would God the Scene were not in one respect chang'd, and that the *Syrian* had not here got the better share. But in the mean time what greater advantage can *Satan* wish for, our strength and industry is diverted upon these foreign expeditions, and *Sion* is left to be guarded by the lame and the blind, such only as are not able to follow the Camp, and then 'tis not strange to see what successful assaults he has made, that that true *practick vertue* which once made such victorious *salleys* on the heathen World,

World, is now baffled in its own Quarters, beaten from its Works, and driven to seek shelter in obscure corners, immures its self in some few private breasts, and so like an exil'd Prince, makes only shift to *live* when it should *reign*. But alas, shall we for ever suffer our selves to be thus befool'd, shall this his stale stratagem after so many hundred years use, nay, and detection too, lose nothing of its Efficacy? Must we always waste our strength in forging shackles for our selves? This is such an infatuation as *Hosea* speaks of, *Chap. 9. 7. The Prophet is a fool; the Spiritual man is mad*: Would God we would once put our selves under the discipline of serious recollection, it might perhaps cure the Phrensie: Let him who has with unwearied diligence watcht all advantage against his *Antagonist*; rack'd and tortured every period of his discourse, to make it confess an absurdity: Let him, I say, consider, how much better that *industry* had been employed in discovering the *fallacies* of our common Adversary, that old Sophister, who puts the most *abusive* *Elenchs* on us, whilst we are most busie in putting them upon one another. Good God, how might true vital Christianity at this day have flourish'd, if we would have bestowed our pains the right way? At how much a cheaper rate might we have *cherisht*, than we *destroy* her. All parties pretend to be very careful of this *Vine*, are very busie in setting traps for the *little Foxes*, all whom they are pleas'd to call *Hereticks*; and in the mean time take no care of the *wild Boar*, let that

that not only spoil her *branches*, but stock up her *roots*, suffer the most savage bestial vices to destroy both Power and Form of Godliness together. Thus unhappily do we divert our intentions, from our most important concerns. And as *Archimedes* is said to have been so vehemently intent upon a *Geometrical figure*, that he heard not of the taking of the City, till an Enemy gave him his *information* and *death* together: So do we so busie our selves in drawing our several *Schemes* of Religion (every of which will pretend to no less than *Demonstration*) that in the mean, that which alone is *true Religion*, is expos'd to the fury of the Enemy, sack'd, ruined, and like the plough'd up *Jewish Sanctuary*, not one stone left upon another. Certainly most of the *questions* which at this day disturb Christendom, have in respect of *their matter* no Propriety toward the propagating good Life, but, in reference to *their way of manage-ry*, all aptness to hinder it; how much were it then for our *Ease* as well as *profit*, to turn us into the plain road, where none of these Thorny difficulties will encumber us. Alas, why should the *Romanist* so sweat to maintain his *Purgatory flame*, as if he already felt its heat, and would in this world antedate those pains, when the same Industry bestowed here to *purifie himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, would subtract the matter of that *Fire*, and leave little for that furnace to refine; which were doubtless a much securer way, even according to his *own principles*, than to trust to the uncertain devotion of others, to fetch him out

out when once deeply ingulph't: 'Tis surely much better to starve that Fire, by ones own *innocence*, than to leave it to be extinguish't by the Tears and Piety of *surviving friends*. Why should the *Socinian* so eagerly contend for the possibility of keeping the Law, when *one example* would convince more than a *thousand arguments*. Let him bend his study to make himself an instance of his own doctrine; and then though he do finally fail in proving his *Hypothesis*, yet, if he do his utmost, he will not fail of a better *triumph*, than that which the Schools can give; and so will even from his error extract advantage, his very *straying* will by a happy *Antiperistasis*, lead him into the way. Why does the *Predestinarian* so adventerously climb into Heaven, to ransack the celestial *Archives*, read Gods *hidden Decrees*, when with less labour he may secure an *Authentick transcript* within himself; let him according to Saint Peters advice, *add to his faith vertue, and to vertue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, &c.* and that chain of vertues will stand him in much more stead, than if he could as infallibly (as some have confidently) demonstrate every link of *Predestination*: 'Tis the assiduous *practice* of Duty will make his calling and election sure; and unless he can confute that divine *Axiome*, that *without holiness none shall see the Lord*; he cannot but confess he may more profitably busie his thoughts in labouring to become holy, than in disputing whether he can chuse to be so or not. Or lastly, why do we *Christians* of several *perswa-*  
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sions, so fiercely argue against the *salvability* of each other, as if it were not only our Opinion, but our Interest and our Wish, *that all should be damn'd, but those of our particular Sect*; when God knows not only every society, but every single person has enough to do, to *work out his own salvation*, which if we will take the *Apostles* word, is to be done *with fear and trembling*, *Phil. 2. 12.* A temper very widely distant from that of censuring and judging. And sure we should not think that *malefactor* more meriting, or more likely to be acquitted, who should leap from the *Bar* to the *Bench*, and there condemn the whole Goal but himself. 'Twas a sober and Christian *reply* of a late learned Gentleman, who being askt by one whether a *Papist* might be saved, answered, *you may be saved without knowing that.* And would we confine our cares and enquiries, to those things which concern that one great Interest, we might take *less pains*, and yet do *more work*, be *less busie-bodies*, but more *fruitful Christians*, and then sure 'tis time we ask our selves the *Wise mans* question, *Eccles. 5. 16. What profit hath he that laboureth for the wind*; and at last give over this unthriving diligence, and not so emulate the most stupid of Beasts, as to make our selves burthens, only that we may couch under them.

AND were this only *Issachars* lot, 'twere the less to be regretted, but also *Zabulon* herein invades his portion; 'tis they that handle the *pen of the Writer*, that have engroft *this error*, and will not suffer it to be a *Plebeian* one. None do  
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so much this way mis-employ the two vulgar talents of Time and Industry, as those who have a third superadded to them, that of Extraordinary Faculties and endowments which they do as prodigally lavish as either of the former. The Beginners or Abettors of *contentions* have generally been Persons of the most *acute refin'd wits* and *excellent learning*, which has enabled them for those quirks and subtilties, of which grosser understandings would have remain'd more happily ignorant: A strange production that the *greatest beauties* of Nature and Art, should ingender the *foulest deformity* in Religion. Thus alas have *Satans* altars the pre-emption of *Gods*, the fattest Oblation brought to feed the fire of *contention*, whilst that of *devotion* expires for want of Nourishment. It was indeed no wonder, that the blind zeal of *Pagans* had made him so wantonly nice, that none but the choicest victims would serve his turn; none but an *Andromeda* and an *Iphigenia*, Royal and Virgin sacrifices propitiate his infernal Deities: but that among *Christians* he should still have the *same Election*, have the richest treasures of those, who say they war against him, laid at his feet, have his choicest weapons out of his Enemies magazine, is a riddle that can scarce be solved, but by concluding *Idolatry* has only chang'd its *form*, and that he sits as securely enshrin'd in *mens passions* and animosities, as ever he did in an *Idol Temple*; so that he seems rather to have lost the *pomp*, than the *power* of Regiment. But admit, that he were not herein  
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so immediately Gods rival, that these *speculative debates* had none of those adherencies, which do so directly gratifie him, yet still he is secur'd of gaining somewhat at rebound; for alas, when mens faculties are thus employed, what Weapons are there left for the defence of true *practick vertue*, and God knows, she needs them but too much: Mens *lusts* are grown subtile Disputants, so that the most improved *reason* may find work enough to manage the Contest; And surely would men of parts timely have bent their endeavours this way, vice could not have got so strong a party. Men are ashamed to be *Profelytes* to a weak Arguer, as thinking they must part with their *reputation*, as well as their *sin*: and certainly nothing is a more general *discouragement* from Piety, than the *opinion of its votaries* not being Persons of Parts, and exalted Understandings; a Prejudice as old as the time of our *Saviour*, as may appear from *Jo. 7.* Would God our greatest *Rabbies* would sadly consider how much they have contributed to this scandal, while by laying out their parts on *Polemick niceties*, they have neglected the more weighty part of their business, & given too much Attestation to that scandalous Maxim, that *Ignorance is the mother of Devotion*: Certainly this is quite to mistake their *Commission*, which is not that of a *Herauld*, to proclaim War amongst men, but that of an *Embassador*, to reconcile them first to holiness, and by it to God: And doubtless *one soul* gain'd to Piety, would more promote their account, than *many thousands*

*thousands* secur'd to a Sect or Party. We find how sad the doom was of that Servant who wrapt up his Talent, but we have no cause to think it would have been at all easier, if he had melted the Talent into bullets, to maintain the skirmish with his fellows: Whether that be not the case of some who have receiv'd not the *one* Talent but the *five*, I leave it to be discuss'd between God and their own Consciences; but in the *interim*, 'tis sad to see how unhappily men engage their endeavours, which seems to represent the reverse of *Esay's Prophecie*, we having beat our ploughshares into swords, and our pruning hooks into spears, all the Instruments of fertility and growth in *Grace*, into Engins of *War* and *discord*; and then it must needs be a most deplorable condition to which Christianity is reduced; which seems in this to be under the same calamity, which her distressed professors suffer from the *Turkish* tyranny, whilst her hopefullest and most pregnant Children, are like *Fanizaries* and *Timariots* trained up to fight against her. And let none wonder that I call it fighting against her, when yet perhaps none of them do formally renounce her; for that Circumstance only determines the War to be *intestine*, not *foreign*; and if our own sad Experiences had not too much qualified us to judge, I might appeal to the universal vote of mankind, which of those were the most destructive. Indeed were there no other Act of hostility discernable, but that which we have hitherto insisted on, the intercepting

cepting her supplies, the cutting off from her that time, industry and gifts, whereby she would be nourisht and supported, that were irreparably injurious to her, and consequently most grateful to that grand *Enemy* who as hath been shew'd, makes advantage of our *Wranglings* of *Dissentions* with one another, to reak his more inveterate *Malice* on us all.

## CHAP. X.

*A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from disputes, as they supplant Charity.*

**B**UT alas, the mischief of these debates, can never be describ'd by bare *negatives*, there are multitudes of *positive* ills, that inseparably adhere to them, and those of so destructive a force, that if Christianity were beleagred and famisht by the former, she is storm'd and batter'd by these, and so is ascertain'd to sink under all the methods of ruine. In the front of these we may well rank those displacencies and animosities which are the product of our speculative differences, and which do indeed so naturally result from them, that 'tis not to be hoped so long as the *one* continues that the *other* will ever cease. For though in *practice* we often see a bewitching Sin dethrone the Reason, and make men act as if they had no such superior  
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principle to guide them, yet in matters of *Speculation* their *affections* are generally strongly influenc'd by their *understandings*. We do not only approve, but love those notions wherewith we are prepossess'd, which kindness as it propagates its self to the *abettors* of the same Tenets, so also it insinuates dislikes to the *opposers*. And as that opposition advances, so the disgust does too, till at last the Scene shifts, and the *Persons* are at a greater war than the *Opinions*. But we need not thus derive a proof from the *causes*, when the thing does too demonstrably attest its self by the *effects*; for what issues are there of the mortallest hatred, which do not plentifully flow from this fountain. *Humane nature* we know has but three waies of actuating its Passions; by *thought*, by *word*, and by *deeds*; and we may surely conclude the feud very bitter that employes all these Engins, as 'tis too visible this does; for though the *former* of these be in their own nature inscrutable, to all but omniscience, yet the *two later* are, according to *Christs* own Rule of the *Tree by the fruits*, infallible *Criteria* of them; and those make such liberal discoveries, that I think I may appeal to any who have espous'd a *party*, whether they have not with the first discriminating rudiments of their own Sect, imbib'd a secret *confus'd prejudice* to all others. Nay, I fear there are but few of so mortified passions, as to have stopt there, and not advanc'd to a direct aversion, and alienation of mind. Indeed were it not for this, 'twere scarce possible  
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for so many of the *vulgar*, to be such *Bigots* in their several factions; for alas, their Intellects are generally too *gross*, to have any *clear* apprehension of the Points they contend for; their Leaders only give them some *general confus'd notions*, just enough to excite their *displeasure* against all Dissenters, and then their *anger* must presently be call'd *zeal*, and instead of the more uneasy task of suppressing their passion, this expedient serves at once to hallow and gratifie it: Nay, so ridiculous have some mens prepossessions of this kind been, that they would scarce allow those to be *entire men* whom they thought not *sound believers*, but have phancied I know not what *bodily* as well as *mental* Monstrosities in those they were pleas'd to call *Hereticks*; a piece of childish credulity which the emissaries of some factions have not disdain'd to make their advantage of. But these inward disgusts and rancours are but the first bound of this ball of contention, when this leven is once in the *heart*, it will quickly diffuse its self, and both *tongue* and *hands* will be tainted with it. Hence comes it, that disputes in religion are managed with such virulency and bitterness, that one would think the Disputants had put off much of *Humanity*, before they come thus to treat of *Divinity*. The government of the Tongue is a piece of morality which sober nature dictates, which yet in this instance many even of our greatest Scholars seem totally to have unlearn't; For whether we consider the unseemly reproaches, or ri-



gid censures, wherewith almost all parties pursue their Antagonists, we have reason to say with S. James, *The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly Poyson*: would God their guilt of this kind, did not so loudly proclaim its self, as to supersede the need of *proof*. 'Tis too obvious that the *Satyr* has usurpt the chair, and *polemick Discourses* are degenerated into *libels* and *invectives*, our Controvertists fall from *arguments* to *reproaches*, as if their Zeal lay more to blast their adversaries *fame*, than confute his *error*; and were this only in personal extemporaneous debates, it might have the excuse of an indeliberate passion. Indeed it were to be wisht that all words of this sort, might vanish in that breath that utters them; that as they resemble the Wind in *fury* and *impetuosity*, so they might do also in *transiency*, and *sudden expiration*: But alas, a course is taken to immortalize them, they become *records*, and our most elaborate *controversial writings*, like the Earth after the curse, over-run with these briars and thorns, *Sarcasms*, *contumelies* and *invectives* filling so many *Pages*, that were those weeded out, many *volumes* would be reduced to a more *moderate bulk* as well as *temper*. Nor are our *censures* any thing more modest than our *reproaches*, every petty difference is mutually upbraided, to each party as a defection from the faith, so that we scarce know a milder name than *Heresie*, nor *doom* than *Damnation*. And as if the visible obliquities of errors would not afford us inditelements enough  
against

against one another, there is a closer inspection made, every *position* is ript up, and curiously dissected, to see what *Embryo* is in its womb, what seeds there are of monstrous productions, which though perhaps the native strength of the Principle would never have *animated*, yet the preternatural heat of an Antagonist can quickly *hatch* them (like the *Chickens* at *grand-Cairo*) into life, and vigorous being: and if by a long chain of (perhaps fallacious) Inferences, some such Imputation is fastned upon a *Thesis*, then all who embrace that, are charg'd also with all this *spurious brood*, though they never so solemnly renounce and disclaim them. A practice sure very uncharitable, for suppose such *consequencies* never so regularly deduced from my *opinion*, yet so long as I seriously disavow and detest them, I may indeed be thought *unwise* in not discerning the connexion, but sure not *impious*. So that unless want of *Logick* be a *damning sin*, no man can hence be authoriz'd to pronounce me *reprobate*: and I cannot think that God, whose rigor bends against the faults of our *wills*, rather than our *understandings*, and who at the last great assize will assume our own consciences into the judicature upon us, will ever sentence me for those *deductions* how horrid soever which I never made mine, or that I shall ever find my self in Hell for a *mispervasion* which I never entertain'd. But there are some whose Censures are not so *artificial*, yet no less *severe*, who beg their *Postulata*, and taking it for granted that such and

such are the only sanctified opinions, make them the *Shiboleth* by which to discriminate not only their *own* Friends, but *Gods* too, lock up heaven gates against any who bring not that Ticket for admittance; and though they make the way wide enough to receive the most *overgrown* Sinner of their own Opinion, yet they pronounce it impossible to the *strictest* piety of a Dissenter. And upon such grounds as these do we mutually doom one another to perdition, never considering that whilest we so briskly presage *others* Damnation, we really prepare for our *own*. Alas, our eagerness to *heat the Furnace seven times hotter for all that bow not to our dictates*, does but expose us to the fate of *Nebuchadnezzars* officers, Dan. 3. to be our selves consum'd in that flame, wherein we cast them. 'Tis indeed to be wisht we would cease to invade *Gods* peculiar, by judging those that must stand or fall to him: but if we will needs take his *office*, 'tis but equitable, we take his *rules* too; and in our *Wrath* remember *Mercy*: But God be blessed 'tis the Judgment of our *upright*, yet *gracious* Master that shall finally determine us; and not that of our passionate fellow-servants: If these were irreversibile, and the Key of the bottomless pit were in our *custody*, we might give Satan a *writ of Ease*, discharge him from his perambulations, he would need no more to walk about as a *Lion*, but might still lie in his *Den*, and we should bring in *prey* enough to glut the Devourer: For could we *execute* all we *condemn*, we might ask the Disciples question,

*Mat.*

Mat. 19.25. *Who then can be saved?* But as these severe censures, are a present violation of *Charity*, so they tend to the perpetuating it by obstructing a return to that *unity of Judgment*, which might make up the very *original breach*: for while men reciprocally load each others opinions and persons with detestable imputations, if they really speak what they think, they do still more deeply impress upon themselves the prejudice to that which they accuse: (*hatred* as well as *love* gathering strength by being actuated): but if they do indeed not believe their own *charge*, yet having once made it, either upon *Interest* or *Passion*, 'tis not probable they will want *pride* to maintain it; and when we consider how ruling a *piece of carnality* that is, we can not wonder if it indispose men to *retractions*. I wish we had not too many, and too late instances of some whose weightiest *objection* against a cause, has been their own former *violence* against it. When men have once fastned the brand of *Heretic*, *Prophaneness* or *Blasphemy* upon an *opinion*, they think they cannot afterwards become its *Profelytes*, without either seeming to *assume* those Guilts, or at least that of having *falsly charg'd* them upon others: and the *Horns* of such a *Dilemma* do so gore their *reputation*, that it often tempts to salve that with the *wounding of conscience*, and perswades them rather to reject their *convictions*, than expose their *credits*. And certainly were this the only ill consequent of our rigorous accusations, it would be enough to pre-

judice them as unfit Instruments in a Gospel design; but though they suit not with that work to which they solemnly *pretend*, they are most accommodate to that they really *produce*: For if we examine in the third place, what *influence* these our eager contests have upon our *actions*, we shall find them fully proportionable to our *words*. And first negatively, 'tis apparent in too many, that they are apt to confine even the common offices of humanity to their own Sect: and others who do not so, yet shew so great partiality in dispensing them, as discovers the Name of *Christian* is not half so charming, as that of their own *particular Faction*. Were Instances of this kind as *needful* as they are *numerous*, 'twere easie to give multitudes: but I think none that has liv'd in our late confusions can have wanted occasions of observing it in *others*, at least, if not in *himself*. But alas, *omissions* are scarce worth our notice, when there are so many *positive Acts* of unkindness so visible among us: They know little of *ancient* and less of *modern Times*, that are unacquainted with the *mutual persecutions*, which almost all parties have alternately rais'd, one against another among Christians: *Confiscations* and *banishments*, *Gibbets* and *flames*; Weapons God knows much too carnal for a spiritual warfare, yet much more in use than those *S. Paul* recommends to *Timothy*, *gentleness*, and *meek instructing of Opposers*, 2 Tim. 25, 26. And when 'tis consider'd that those Opposers too were *Heathens*, 'twill be more than a little strange, that  
Severity

Severity should be allowable to *Brethren*, which was interdicted against *Aliens*. Is it an easier crime to reject the *entire body* of that Faith which was once delivered to the Saints, than to differ in the explication of some *one branch* of it? nay, perhaps only of some *corollary* and *deduction* from it, which as far as it is humane may be fallible, and therefore can no more command my *assent* than it satisfies my *judgment*; yet this is generally the most that can be affirmed of our differences; For almost what Party is there which do not avowedly own all that *Faith* which constituted the first *Christians*; would God we did as uniformly embrace the Charity too; and then most of our disputes would be superseded, at least so calm'd, that there should be none of those destructive effects which they now produce: For alas, how many funeral piles has this preposterous zeal kindled? So that what some said of *Draco's* Laws may too justly be applied to our arguments, that they have been writ rather in *bloud* than *Ink*. But as Christ when he forewarn'd his disciples of the ensuing persecution, tels them not only they shall be kill'd, but they shall be put out of the Synagogue: So now as if Christians were æmulous of every branch of *Jewish* cruelty, we transcribe that part of the copy too, and either by causless excommunicating *others*, or separating *our selves*, we deny the benefit of *publick communion* to each other: And this is a greater severity than the former, by how much more implacable our hate is against what  
we

we count *error*, than what we know to be vice; and by how much the concerns of the *Soul* are more estimable than those of the *Body*. The inveterateness of those Feuds which rise from Opinion, may clearly be discovered in this instance; let a man have committed all the *outrages* which may render him unworthy to live, yet when we prosecute him to *death*, we willingly afford him all helps towards his *future state*, and no man is so inhumane as to refuse to pray, either *for* or *with* a Malefactor; yet some few *speculative differences* are such a gulph betwixt us, that we cannot meet even in that we all acknowledge our common Duty, *the worship of our God*. Certainly among all the accursed issues of our *contention*, there is none more malignant and criminal, than this of *Schism* and *Separation*, and would men judge dispassionately, more irrational neither: For doubtless were our case stated to any sober Heathen, he would never be able to guess, why they who equally acknowledge the advantage and necessity of *prayer*, confess the same God, have the same common wants in this world, and hopes in the next, may not ask in the same *form*, and in the same *place*. Alas, is it not enough to be at distance where we *differ*, but must we be so also where we *agree*? Is unity so dreadful to us, that we must act contradictions to escape it. Surely this is a *stranger fascination* of the spirit of Division, than that in the Gospel *Demoniack*, which enabled him to break all bonds in sunder, and like it, abhors the approaches of



a Saviour, crying out, *What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus the Son of God, art thou come to torment us?* Who knows what a powerful Exorcism the united intercessions of the Christian world might have been; had we joyntly deprecated our quarrels, God might have found a way to have compos'd them, though we could not; and our tears might have cemented those breaches which our *dissents* made, but our *separation* widens. I know the venerable names of the Sanctions of *Holy Church*, the hundred thirty seventh Canon of the Code of the universal Church, which says in exprefs terms, "Ὅτι ἐδὲ αἱρετικοῖς ἢ σχισματικοῖς σὺνδύχεται, *that we ought not to pray with Hereticks or Schismaticks*, and very many warm expressions of the *Fathers*, are producible in this case: But till we Excommunicate with the Tears and Sorrows, and publick concernment of the Primitive Christians, who refus'd all acts of kindness only out of love, and the most ardent Charity, we may by no means lay claim to their pattern, whose estrangements only flow from malice and inveterate hate. Would we indeed comport with the Example of those *happy Times*, we should have fear'd the *guilt of Schism* in our selves so much, as not to have lightly charg'd it upon others; we should have prayed for the *conversion* of Dissenters, not laid *Anathemas* upon them, and prayed for their *confusion*. St. Paul we see, *Heb. 10. 25.* reckons the *forsaking of Assemblies*, as a degree, at least preparative of *Apostasie*; and from his time throughout all the purer ages of the Church

Church the holy Fathers have generally branded it, as the highest impiety; and no marvel, for it is *one* of those Gyant-like sins, which not only oppresses *men*, but invades even *God himself*. 'Tis the mangling and assassinating *that body* to which Christ owns an *inseparable connection*; the putting him to head scatter'd limbs, instead of an entire compact body, as if we meant to refute *St. Paul*, shew him 'tis possible that *Christ may be divided*. Good God, what shall we say when we see Heathen Souldiers estimate Christs *coat* higher than Christians do his *body*! they thought the *one* too good to be parted, but we cease not to tear and mangle the *other*, and which is yet more monstrous, make it *a part of our Religion* to do so. We name our *Opinions* our *Faith*, and when under that Title we have enshrined them, *we* make more barbarous Immolations than ever the most *savage Heathens* did. They sacrificed some few objects of their Love, their *Children*, but we sacrifice the very *affection*, and think our *Zeal* *lukewarm* till it have reduced our Charity to *ashes*. And now if we compare these our *Divisions*, *Wrath* and *Bitterness*, with those fundamental, Gospel precepts of *Unity*, *Love* and *Meekness*, we must surely say we have not there so learn'd Christ. And then how ridiculous is it, to pretend a Zeal to that Gospel, whose very foundations we undermine. Peace is at once the  *blessing* and *duty* of Christians, and those heats of *speculative* Contests which violate it, will certainly never serve to make us either good or happy. And therefore  
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till Charity cease to be an Essential part of Christianity (which certainly we must burn our Bibles ere we can suppose) we must conclude, that our Disputes, and the ways whereby we manage them, how much soever they pretend to Preserve, do indeed evacuate and destroy true, that is, *Practical* Christianity.

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CHAP. XI.

*A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Disputes, as they engage upon ill Arts and Scandalous Practices, to sustain the espoused Cause and Party.*

**A**ND yet so unhappily are many men mistaken, that these *irregular heats* which thus waste the vital spirits of Religion, are thought the most *Sovereign Cordials* to support them. The highest *Paroxysm* of this Fever are deem'd the perfectest *Health*. Men esteem the overflowing of their *Gall*, the exuberance of their *Zeal*, and then all the Promises to the *faithful combatant* in Christs camp, they confidently appropriate to that their so *eminent Grace*; though indeed it can with no more propriety be call'd so, than *Pharaohs lean Kine* might be said to be *fat*, because they had devour'd those that were so. In plain terms, men lay so great weight upon their being of right opinions, and their eagerness of abetting them, that they account that  
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the *unum necessarium*, and think the propagating of those so important a service to God, as will justify the use of the most *interdicted instruments*, legitimate the most *enormous Commissions*, that they can phancy contributive to that pious End: And moreover commute for the neglect of *Prædict duties* in the general tract of their *lives*. I shall not here urge the hazard of mens erring in the choice of opinions, nay, the certainty that of many opposite, one only can be the right; and then to all such as miss, that their very groundwork fails them. I shall only confine my self to the *malignant influence* this Perswasion has on *prædices*, and in that respect I cannot but affirm it a most *pernicious delusion*, which as it tends extremely to the enhansing the bitterness of our contests, so it may justly be reckon'd among the worst effects of them, and is a most *irrefragable proof* how much they obstruct the vital *efficacy of Religion* in our hearts. Nor is it any new thing for men thus to deceive themselves, for we find such *Confidences* as these frequently upbraided to the *Jews*, both by the *Prophets* and *Christ* himself, they thought their *Zeal* to the Temple and ritual observances, so invincibly meritorious, as no *Crime* could defeat, and that their *legal purifications* would render them acceptable in Gods Eyes, in spite of all their *Moral pollutions*: But how fallacious a hope this was, the many severe increpations of God do sufficiently attest. Yet certainly their guilt was far below ours, the things they so depended on were *parts*, though  
not

not the *whole* of their Duty; those *Ordinances*, though perhaps somewhat *adulterated* by *Rabbinical* mixtures, yet for the main were *instituted* by God himself, and that with a design of discriminating, and separating them from the rest of the world; and such peculiarities and priviledges as these, might have an aptness to excite that presumption: But alas, the case is otherwise with most of us; they are not the *Revelations* of Gods will, not the *Testament* of our dying Redeemer, but some *Codicils* and *Annexes* of our own we so earnestly abet. 'Tis not the *Text* (for then 'twere impossible for any that receiv'd the same Canon of Scripture to differ) but our *glosses* to which we pay such Reverence; and when on that account we *sever* our selves from those to whom the Commands of God, the Blood of our Saviour have most closely *united* and *cemented* us: We can yet make a shift to think that there is so much of Sacred in this, as shall not only render it highly rewardable, but also hallow all other profanations of our lives; and in our *Jehu* march upon such an expedition, can turn all regrets of conscience (like *Forams* messengers) behind us. That this is so, none can doubt who observe with what boldness men rush upon the most *unchristian* sins, in pursuit of what they Phancy a *Christian* cause. Were it not for this *amulet*, how were it possible for any to think they may venture upon Perjury, Sacriledge, Murder, Regicide, any thing without impeachment to their *Saintship*; nay, to think that the only danger lies on the other side,

in being *remissly wicked*, that to *slack* any thing of the utmost speed, is *to do the work of the Lord negligently*. Yet that this has been a prevailing Perswasion, we have had too many, and too sad instances; and God grant we may not find them so repeated, that our *sense* may supersede the *use* of our memories concerning them; nor has this been peculiar to one only Sect, but those who are otherwise at the widest distance unite in this Principle. They are not only *Phanaticks* that can say *grace* over the foulest *crimes*, and consecrate them to the use of a *good cause*; if we examine the *Dypticks* either of Conclave or Consistory, we shall find some Saints upon that account, who could never have been so upon any other. And when we consider how often *Heaven* has been mortgaged to gain Auxiliaries from *Hell*, how men have been encouraged to the most *damning sins*, by *promises* of being certainly saved; we must either think that a *Holy cause* is omnipotent enough to reverse *Gods decrees*, to *save* whom he would *damn*, or else that this pretence is one of the most ruinous deceits, the most fatal Treachery to souls that ever *Satan* contriv'd, who though he do in all instances play the *Mountebank*, yet sure never more than when on confidence of this *Antidote* he perswades us thus to swallow down his *deadliest Poyson*.

I MUST not here attempt to enumerate all the *unchristian practices*, that have on this score been made, not only *lawful* but *meritorious*; yet there is one of so frequent use, that I must needs  
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advert unto it, and that is, those *calumnies* and *falsehoods*, which are now become a piece of *Ecclesiastick* as well as *state policy*, and a great part of that offensive armour wherewith our controvertists assault one another. Indeed if we consider how many *forges* are daily going for these *Engines*, we shall have reason to think, all Parties have an high esteem of their *usefulness*. Of these *Calumnies* there are too many sorts and degrees to be here particulariz'd: And indeed those, who permit themselves to use any, can be suppos'd to have no other *boundaries* than the advantage of their *cause*: And accordingly as that seems to exact, they lay their *Scene*; sometimes they traduce the persons of their opposers, and by raising prejudices against them, hope some of it will reflect upon their doctrine: did men generally know how to distinguish between *reports* and *certainities*, this *stratagem* would be as *unskilful* as it is *uningenious*: But considering the vulgar temper, its not unaptly suited to it. This it seems was anciently understood, it being the old Greek advice, *ὑπερβύτας ἔπτεσαι καὶ δάκνεις ταῖς διαβολαῖς, ὅτι καὶ διεσπύσῃ τὸ ἔλκος ὁ διεθγυμῆτος, ἢ οὐλὴ μὲν αὖτῃς διαβολῆς.* To calumniate stoutly, for that how perfectly soever the wound of reproach be heal'd, there will remain a scar; and though we wipe away with never so much care the dirt thrown at us, there will be left some sulliage behind: And accordingly this was the Expedient the *Pagans* us'd against the *Primitive Christians*, to put them thus in the skins of beasts, and shapes of monsters, and then worry them to



death. And this is the method still, though heightned and improved, and our *Religion* has suffered infinitely more since we us'd it against *each other*, than when they manag'd it against the *whole community*. But besides this *defamation* of Persons, another branch of this black Art is the *depraving* of Writings, both in the sense and very letter, and direct words; for the former of these, whosoever observes the strange perversions, and affected mistakes of mens meanings visible in many of our *Polemick* discourses, will sure resolve that a mans *intentions*, as well as his *words* and *actions* may be calumniated: Nor does the *letter* scape better, every period which threatens danger to the cause must be mutilated and dismembred, and as *Sampson* was by the *Philistines*, lose its Hair and Eyes, and then be made sport for the whole party. And I fear there are too few, who do not in this case take the *Jewish* reparation, an *Eye for an Eye*, &c. retaliate to the adversary the foul play they receive. But some advance yet higher, and think it not enough to make an Argument or Testimony useles to the *Enemy*, unless they draw it over to *themselves*, make it *betray* the side it was to *maintain*, and as a Conqueror uses to restore Arms to such of the adverse party, as will turn to his, so after they have by satisfactions secured themselves of its aid, it shall then be made as potent as is possible, and with such kind of *Renegado troops* as these, some *causes* have been much supported. Yet were this *violation* offer'd only to the writings of living men, who might vindicate

cate it, 'twere not so transcendently ignoble, but it most frequently falls upon those, who have made their beds in the dust; who have chang'd their own *Form*, and cannot secure their *Writings* from the same fate: Nay, 'tis yet more frequently *those*, whom we have all reason to suppose, and most of us profess to believe, *glorified Saints*; and this superadds a daring presumption to all other circumstances of the guilt, and heightens an injustice into Sacrilege. It has always been held the most detestable sort of *forgery* to counterfeit *Testaments*, though the *Testator* were of never so low a quality, or his *bequests* of never so mean a value: And shall it now pass for a piece of *commendable dexterity*, an art of manage to falsifie those *writings* by which the Fathers of the Church design'd to entail *truth* and *piety*, not *strife* and *faction* upon her. We know *Necromancy* has justly been reputed one of the most horrid forms of *Sorcery*, because it enforced *dead* men to speak what the *living* were inquisitive to hear. I leave it to be consider'd what this wants of that, besides the dreadful *ceremonies* of the Incantation; certainly 'tis a guilt which nothing but our too familiar acquaintance with it could make unformidable. And indeed this whole method of serving a *cause* by such *sinister means* is so utterly repugnant to the Principles even of ingenuous nature, that we can scarce cast a greater scandal upon an Opinion, than to shew it needs such Aids. 'Tis by *Historians* branded as an execrable fact in him, who to secure himself from a neighbour

Prince, call'd in the *Turk* into Christendom: But sure those who to fortifie their side have brought in this Artifice of *calumniating* and *falsifying*, have done an Act no less *impious*; the constitution of Christianity agreeing full as well with the *Alcoran* as with these *Piafraudes*; as some of them who perhaps mean the *fraud* more than the *Piety* are pleas'd to call them. Nay indeed, they accord not much better with *Philosophy* than *Divinity*, every man knows the nature of contraries is to combat and expel, not to cherish and support one another. How absurd is it then for those, who say they design to advance *truth*, to make *falsehood* their Instrument. I wish they would experiment to accommodate their secular concerns at the same rate, let them *cool* them in the Fire, *warm* them in the Frost, and *feed* themselves by perpetual Fasting, and when they find cause to commend the efficacy of that Method, they may with fairer pretence in this higher instance reconcile the feuds of Reason and of Nature, and make a *lye* the Evidence of *Truth*. In the interim, it may well pass for *Sophistry* as well as *sin*; and doubtless whatever advantages are hop'd for to private Sects and Parties by this art, Christian Religion in general is hugely prejudiced by it: For when men shall compare the veracity of *Heathens* with our falsehoods; learn from *Historians*, that among the *Persians*, εἰχλίσον τὸ ψεῦδος ναυόμισαι, *to lie was deem'd a fault of the greatest turpitude*, and they therefore laid an ill Character upon persons in debt, ἐτι ἀνάγκη τὸν ὑφείλοντα καὶ τὸ ψεῦδος λέγειν, *because*

because he that is so must needs tell lyes : And when they shall see in the Laws of *Gingis* a barbarous Tartar, Lying made a capital crime, and yet among Christian *Casuits* made a holy artifice, they will be tempted to think our end as fictitious as our way ; and that our Religion has little countenance from truth, which is thus fain to make lyes its Refuge. Thus unhappily do these Arrows revert, not only on those who shoot them, but in the face of *Christianity* its self, which is defam'd, and traduced by those *slanders*, we aim at our private adversaries.

BUT besides this direct, there are other more oblique Wayes of making vice subservient to Religion, or to speak more properly, of making Religion subservient to vice ; for some Zealots of several parties, who more regard the numerousness than purity of their Professors, discerning how much the sensual part of mankind startle at the strictness of Gospel precepts, are industrious to take off that discouragement; not by convincing them of the real divine sweetness and pleasantness of them, but by debasing and accommodating them more to the carnal appetite : Yet here men proceed not all alike, some use Christs yoke, as *Hananiah* did that of *Jeremy*, break it quite off ; others only essay to slacken and alleviate it, that it may not pinch the lusts of libertine *Profelytes* : Of the first sort are such, as having made the adherence to their Party, the infallible mark of Sanctification, and that Sanctification of Election, do from thence proclaim to all who are so qualified

a general Jubile and manumission from the bond even of *Christ's* as well as *Moses's* Law: or if some of them allow it to remain an impotent director, yet while they affirm that *God sees no sin in his Elect*, or if he do, beholds them as a Father does the harmless falls of his Child, rather with *smiles* than *anger*, they make the *violations* of it so safe, that they are too sure to be many, and between abrogating and thus enervating a law, the *difference* is meerly verbal.

O F the second sort are some, who by indulgent and partial glosses, seek to mollifie the severity of *Christ's* commands. That contrive for their Clients not the *means* of Obeying, but the *arts* of Escaping them. Like the *unjust Steward* teach their lords Debtors to *write fifty instead of a Hundred*; and decide Cases of conscience more according to the *interests* and *passions* of men, than the *will* of *Christ*. There are a generation of men of whose Dexterity in this faculty the world has taken so much notice that I need not name them, a sort of easie *Casuists* who seem to have erected a *Court of Equity* to relieve men against the *rigor* of *divine Law*; and there is little doubt but they shall find enough ready to make such *appeals*: Men love to be Christians as Cheap as they can, and therefore will close with that party, which offers the easiest terms: And then while these spiritual *Pioneers* do thus enlarge the narrow way, make it a road as well for the Beast as the Man, the *brutish sensual*, as well as *rational divine* Part of us, no wonder though Shoals of  
Converts

Converts throng in to them. But 'tis to be consider'd that all this while this is winning Profelytes to themselves not to God : the gaining them to a *Sect* not a *religion*; at least not to that pure religion, and undefiled which the grand Author of our Faith has both exemplified, and propos'd to us; for how much that suffers by this way of propugning private opinions, is more than enough apparent. Yet so ambitious are our prime leaders of such Trophies that in order to them some are said to ascend yet a step higher, and besides this general encouragement they give to mens lusts by *taking off* Restraints, do in some cases actually *promote* and *excite* them. For when they see a licentious person whose *acquest* they judge beneficial to their *cause*, they have artifices of fomenting his riots, do not only take off the *bridle*, but use the *spur* also, hoping that at the rebound it may conduce to their *End*. If any think it impossible it should do so, let them consider that among our various Opinions some there are which sell heaven much cheaper than others dare, that allow such *ease attonements* as the most *habituated sinner* need not despair of: and then the most infallible means to ascertain such to that side, is to make them too bad for any other. For when a man is resolute to keep his *sins* while he *lives*, and yet unwilling to relinquish all *hopes* when he *dies*, 'tis more than probable he will embrace that profession which bids fairest to the reconciling those so distant interests; and therefore the *greater malefactor* he is,

the more sure he will be *to fly to the horns of this Altar*; the nearer sinking, the apter to catch at these reeds; so that the Project is not *impolitick*, though God knows so *impious* that 'tis much fitter for the School of *Machiavil* than of *Christ*; and seems to verifie that imputation as to a part of Christians, which *Julian* once as falsely as maliciously affixt upon the whole: that *their Church was an Asylum and sanctuary for the most flagitious offenders, and protected those guilts to which no other religion allowed any Expiation*. 'Tis indeed so horrid that I cannot think there are many *consciences* so cauteriz'd by this fiery zeal as to admit it, yet that some have done it, there is too much certainty, and therefore 'tis no improper instance in our present argument, for if mens *eagerness* to support their several sides, can transport them to such *attempts* as these, 'tis abundant Evidence how much Christianity loses by these contests of under factions, which while they pretend to *guard*, do indeed *invade* her under her own Colours.

BUT besides the faults men commit with this immediate *avowed aspect* upon their religion, there are others which slyly shroud themselves under the *skirt* of its *mantle*: I mean those *Sins* of common life, which though they pretend not to advance the cause, yet when acted by a *Zealot* are thought to be overwhelm'd by his heroick *Piety*. Indeed men who make themselves so much work about others *faith*, are seldom at leisure to regulate their own *practice*, and so have no way  
of



of stating their accounts with God, but by balancing the *excess* of the one against the *defects* of the other: How such reckonings will pass the grand Audit, 'tis I think not hard to divine, but in the interim, it keeps them very cheerful and secure, teaches them a Receipt to retain all their *Sins*, and yet lose none of their *confidence*; so that when they have immerst themselves in all filthiness both of flesh and Spirit, they can trust their zeal to refine them from all that Dross. Nor does it only thus reconcile them to their own vices, but to other mens also, whose most brutish sensualities they can look on with perfect patience, nay even *Atheism* its self can have fair *Quarter*: They are not much discomposed to see men have *no religion*, 'tis only the having *one different* from their own that awakes their indignation; then like *Saul* when seiz'd on by the *evil spirit*, they cast about their Javelins, think no rigor too great on such a provocation, yet even here they have intervals, and the very same persons who are thus at odds upon a *religious*, can unite upon a *vicious* account. Those who mutually denounce *damnation* to each other, can with full accord combine in those *practices* which will ascertain it to them both, as if they so much fear'd to have their *predictions* defeated, that they would be each others *convoy* to the land of darkness. Those that will by no means meet at the *Church*, know not when to part at the *Tavern*, and though they will not joyntly partake of the *Cup of the Lord*, are yet very sociable at the *Cup of*

of Devils; I mean those excessive debauches, which are a most acceptable drink-offering to those infernal spirits. Have we not seen many whose distant opinions have fastned upon one another the brand of *Antichristianism*, who have yet like *Gog* and *Magog* joyn'd against the holy city: and those who could never agree on the way of setting up *Christs Throne*, have yet been very unanimous in pulling down the *Kings*. Thus alas do we juggle one another out of the *narrow path* that leads to life, but can hand in hand run our Carrier in the *broad way* of destruction. And doubtless this great unevenness, these spiritual feuds, and carnal endearments between the same persons; this *impetuous zeal*, and as *impetuous lusts* in the same breasts could never be, did not men depend so confidently on the *one*, as to think it will commute, and satisfie for the *other*. But alas, how groundless a Presumption this is, the whole tenor of the Gospel does abundantly witness. In all that grand *Charter* where is there the least Clause importing such an *immunity*. I am sure there are multitudes that assert the contrary. Indeed the whole frame of the Evangelical covenant is totally against it: That requiring an entire uniform Sanctity, and allowing no other *priviledge* to the *sins* of the most knowing Professors, but a *prebeminence* in *punishment*, the being beaten with many *stripes*. And when 'tis consider'd that the *end* of all religion is but the drawing us to a *conformity* with God, the impressing on us some Character of his eternal goodness and holiness,

holiness, 'twill be as absurd as impious to believe that our *zeal* to any Religion can absolve us from that *purity* which is the end and design of all. And while this is the way men take to approve their piety, 'tis no marvail to find so *many* Christians, and so *little* Christianity in the world: for that is not to be estimated by the *number* of its professors, but by their *obedience* to its Rules, and he that gives up his *name* to it and not his *heart*, will receive as little *advantage* by it, as he brings *honour* to it, and how little that is in respect of its internal *Efficacy*, is I presume competently evidenced.

BUT that we may more thoroughly discern how universally destructive our *wranglings* are to it, in all its *concerns*, let us a little examine whether they do not endamage it even in respect of *outward profession* also. This may seem a strange Quære to those who think their *disputes* about Religion are to denominate them the great *confessors* of the Age: yet certainly there is but too much ground not only for the *enquiry*, but to resolve it in the *affirmative*. And if it prove so, 'twill infer but sadly to those who having laid the whole stress of their *Hopes* upon their zeal to advance their Faith, will be found to have *pul'd down* more than they have *built up*. Now Christianity may in respect of profession decay two waies, either in its *hopes*, or in its *possession*, the one in relation to *Aliens*, the other to *Disciples*. The first by hindring the access of *new Converts*, the second by staggering or alienating

ting the *old*, and both these waies she visibly appears to suffer by our divisions. And first if we consult but our experience, if we trust but our own observations, we cannot but confess that the Gospel has long been at a great stand. That that *Sun* which at its first arising was like *David's*, *Pf.* 19. surrounded the world in a vigorous efficacious motion, is since become like *Joshua's*, *Josh.* 10. 12. arrested in its course: Nay like *Hezekiah's*, gone backward, *Is.* 38. 8. *Mahumetism* (if not *Paganism*) having long taken up its seat in divers of the most flourishing Apostolick plantations. A sad change, that from the daily and numerous accession of the first times, it should now become a kind of *Prodigy*, a piece of *news*, scarce heard in an Age, that one single *Profelyte* is gain'd to the *Church*, yet that thus it is, is too obvious to be denied. And truly it is not much less apparent that our dissentions have in a great degree contributed to it. For first, as to the *extirpation* of the Eastern Churches, he that shall examine the records of those times, will have cause to say their Janglings and Divisions were not only in a *moral* or *divine*, but even in a *proper natural* sense, the Instruments of it. The *Turk* only coming in at those breaches which themselves had made, nor had their *Candlestick* probably been removed, had they not first abus'd its *light*, to the setting themselves in *Combustion*. That the same *cause* has not yet had the same *effect* among us, is owing not to its *unaptness* to produce it, but to the admirable *patience* and *mercy* of God, who yet withholds that

that fatal Judgment, which we do our parts to pull upon our selves; our mutual violences against one another herein unhappily combining and making one united force against us all. But though the *divine goodness* have hitherto so countermined our *treachery* to our selves, as not to suffer us to enjoy that state of darkness we have so courted, yet certainly our *contentions* are extremely necessary to the continuing it upon others, our many *new* and *wandering lights*, however they fail of having that Property of the *Pillar of fire*, Ex. 14. of illuminating and conducting the *Israelites*, yet too much answer its other, in becoming *cloud* and *darkness* to the *Egyptians*; there being scarce any thing more apt to intercept the beams of the Sun of righteousness from the Heathen world, every of those *little enclosures* our Factions have made in the Church, becoming a *great partition wall* to keep others out of it. This may be made evident in several respects. As first, in relation to those many *moral obliquities* in which our eager disputes do (as hath already been shewed) betray us, which cannot but give so much *scandal* to any considering man, that we can scarce hope any can turn to us as to a better Religion, but will rather think it the way to relinquish all; to obliterate those *native impressions* of Piety and Honesty they brought with them into the world, so that if we expect any *Profelytes* it must be only such as would live *worse* than meer nature allows them.

BUT

BUT this though as important a consideration as can well be, I shall not here insist on, having in the second Section given some instances how apt our *Morality* is to defame our *Divinity*, and confirm men in Opposition to it. But though this be a *great*, yet 'tis not the *only* means by which our Dissentions hinder the progress of the Gospel, for they do not only make *infidels* less inclinable to receive it, but *us* to propagate it. Those do so busie and engross us, that there is neither leisure nor heart left for this. Our *activest spirits* are so engaged at home in asserting their *private quarrels*, that all such *foreign designs* are forgot. For as in *Civil*, so in *Ecclesiastical* concerns, every one is more industrious to advance his *peculiar interest* than that of the *community*, accordingly we find innumerable promulgators of every new Opinion. No *Seet* wants its *Apostles* to propagate and diffuse it; but where are there any that have the like care for the main *Root* of Christian Religion, which they have for these little *Twigs* and *Offesets* which they have planted in their own Gardens; how many ages must we look back to find a man that has made it his business to convert *Infidels* to the Faith. 'Tis true indeed there are some very magnificent relations of *modern attempts* this way, of great industry some have us'd to bring the most savage nations to the obedience of Christ: but if we examine 'twill be obvious, the main design was to subject them to themselves. 'Twas not so much their *Heathenism* as their *territories* they invaded,

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and such *Apostles* as these are ill qualified to make *S. Paul's* profession, 2 Cor. 12. 16. *I seek not yours but you.* And the success of such *Essays* have been answerable to the motive; they have won riches but not *Souls*. The *Gospel* in one hand and a sword in the other has made many *slaves*, but I fear few *Christians*. Indeed, what encouragement had those poor creatures to receive a Religion from their Oppressors? why should they think that those who tortured and kill'd their bodies, were really concern'd to save their *Souls*? or that those who would not permit them to enjoy what was their own, meant to help them to any thing better? And while the *felicities* of another world were recommended to them only by such, as had deprived them of all in *this*, we cannot wonder at their little appetite to embrace them; or to find the oppressed *Indians* protest against that heaven where the *Spaniards* are to be their cohabitants. In short, this is sure such a method of *Evangelizing*, as too widely differs from that which first planted the *Church*, to be likely to advance its growth: so that notwithstanding all pretences of this kind, we may resume our assertion, and conclude that our intestine discords (perhaps not those alone) have diverted the Zeal of this more Christian undertaking, and left a great part of the world under that invincible Ignorance *S. Paul* mentions, Rom. 10. 14. *How shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher:*



*preacher*: and God knows whether we have not herein provided better for their Excuse than our own.

T H E R E is yet another way by which our *divisions* impede their *conversion*, and that is by giving them *prejudice* to that Doctrine about which our selves cannot agree. 'Tis an universal Maxim that *truth is alwaies consonant to its self*; and therefore where they see so little *unity* they have too much *temptation* to doubt of Truth. He that wandering should meet a Company that offer to conduct him to his journeys end, might reasonably incline to deliver himself up to their *guidance*; but if he find them unagreed upon the way, one Disputing for this, and another for that, and every one protesting against all but his own; he would sure retract his *confidence*, and think they offer'd him only more variety of mistakes, resolve it as safe to trust himself to his *own* Errors as *other mens*. And this alas seems to be too exact a parallel of the present case; we Christians do so mutually damn one another, that a poor *Turk* or *Heathen* will think, he rather *multiplies* than *ends* his Danger by associating himself with us; for there being so many parties, which soever he joyns himself to, there will be abundant odds against him; so that if he could be secur'd the truth were among us, yet the great difficulty of finding it out, would be a very disheartning consideration. Besides men love in *transactions* of great Importance to have as *many*, and as *credible Vouchers* as may be, and upon that

that score 'twill sure be but a cold inducement, to any to turn *Christian* to foresee, that when he has done so, he shall be *disown'd* by far the greater part of that number, and that at his entrance into the *Church*, he shall be met with almost as many *Anathemas*, as when he was an *Infidel*. Nay, I scarce know whether I may call it an entrance into the *Church*; or rather into a *Conventicle*, or particular *Congregation*, our *Schisms* and *Separations* having hardly left a possibility of *external communion* with the *universal Church*, since the *Communicating* with one part of it, does infallibly *Excommunicate* from another. Thus have we placed our *flaming Sword* (though God knows no *Cherubim*) at the gate of our *Paradise*, and when God calls all men to the *waters of life*, our *Contentions* have made them like *those of Marah*, so bitter and unpleasant, as deters and averts men from them: Which as it is in the highest degree injurious to them, so is it contumelious to *him*, whose invitations are by this means frustrated; 'tis in some degree the evacuating one of the main *purposes* of *Christ's* coming into the *World*, which was to *call men out of darkness into his marvellous light*, and as He was thus sent by his *Father*, so also were the *Apostles* solemnly commissioned by him to preach to the *Gentile world*, who with indefatigable industry and resolute sufferings pursued the *charge*; and sure this is competent evidence, that the design was of the greatest and most weighty importance, and such as can never be out-dated,

till there cease to be objects of it, unbelievers to convert: And by that let us measure the guilt of obstructing it, which if we would impartially do, I assure my self the most *passionate Bigot* of any Party must confess, that it infinitely out-weighs all the Piety his doctrine can pretend to, that his *peculiar Church* gains not so much as the *Catholick* loses: And that how confidently soever he have Canoniz'd his quarrels, they are indeed but the worst sort of Heathens, and serve to keep out the better. Yet besides the mischief they do in relation to those that are *without*, they are extremely pernicious to those that are *within*, and that not only to some *one Sect*, but like an *universal poyson*, that is equally deadly to the most contrary complections, they operate on the most distant ranks of Professors, the *tender* and the *obdurate*, the *scrupulous* and the *profane*. And first for the tender tremulous Christian, 'tis easie to discern how much he must be distracted and amaz'd by them, for while he hears each *Sect* thunder out *Damnation* against each other, he cannot but be startled at the *danger* of adhering to the *wrong*, and though that may a while excite his diligence to discover the *right*, yet when he comes to that inquisition, he will meet with so many *Polemick intricacies* to entangle him, that after many turns, first to one side, and then to another, he will be apt to think the only *clue* to extricate him out of this *labyrinth* of many Religions, is to *abandon all*. Nor is this *meer Speculation* and *Conjecture*, God knows we have had successively  
through

through the whole round of Error too many *practick experiments* of it. Several persons there have been, whose Zeal to find out *truth* by an unhappy rule of *False*, directed them to allow of every Error: While like *sick men*, who desire to die good cheap, they put themselves into the hands of any *Empirick*; follow each bold pretender, that has the impudence to talk of Truth, till Superstition ends in Profanation, *Godliness* proves *Atheism*, and by having been of many *Seets*, at last have no Religion. And surely this is a most unhappy Effect of our discords, thus to be *stumbling-blocks* in our brothers way, and when we remember the woes pronounc'd against those that shall Scandalize any of the little ones, 'twill be strange how men can think to approve their *Christianity*, by the ruine of their Brothers, or secure themselves of *Heaven* by keeping Others thence: For though Christ tells his Disciples there should be some that should think it a *service to God to kill their Bodies*, yet to phancy the *destroying of Souls* so too, is a Deception of which we have neither record nor prediction in Holy Writ, and is a superfection of the spirits of delusion, peculiar to those who have placed their own sanctity in these religious wranglings, which serve to destroy it in other men. And as they thus serve on the one side to shipwrack the *faith* of these weak unstable Souls; so do they on the other advance the *impiety* of the daring sinner; for as they are Temptation to the one, so are they Pretence and Excuse to the other to bid defiance to all Religion. He

whose dissolute *affections* have so long been courting his *understanding* to turn Atheist, will sure not lose the advantage of so plausible an Argument as our *divisions* afford him; and since his *lusts* engage him in an irreconcilable War against the *practick* part of Piety, he will most gladly embrace this occasion of quarrel against the *Theory* also: So making himself entire, and extinguishing those uneasy regrets and misgivings arising from the repugnancy of his *life* to his *belief*. It were not hard to give a *compendium* of these mens *Logick*, and draw out those *Schemes* of Discourse, by which from our *differences* in Religion they infer the *discarding* of all. But I fear these are already too well known, and where they are not, I should be loth to be any mans Instructor. This is I am sure too palpable, that how *fallacious* soever these Reasonings are, they have been very *operative*, as appears by the number of those *avowed Atheists* among us, who placing themselves in the seat of the scorner, give themselves much pleasing Divertisement by *deriding* our eager *scuffles* about that which they think nothing. If any man thinks that the Church is no loser by the defection of such *Libertines*, I must be allowed to dissent from him: For first, there are examples of the most vicious Persons, that have been reduced, and while they retain their Christian *belief*, that lays such undeniable obligations to good *life*, that whenever they resume their *reason*, they must take up *vertue* also with it; so that there is an equal possibility of their being *good*, that there

is of their being *rational*: But when all hope and fear of a future estate is disclaim'd, when those cords are broken which should pull them up from the Dungeon, then, and not before is their state visibly desperate. But besides this possibility of recovering them, the danger of losing others is to be considered. Bold *Atheism* is like a raging *Pestilence*, which taints the very *Air*, so that those impious *discoursings* which are the *effects* of some mens Vices, may be the *cause* of others; and we too often see that those who ascended themselves by *degrees*, do in an *instant* advance their *Profelytes* to the height of Irreligion, as appears by the strange proficiency of some, whose Years allow them not to have arrived to it otherwise than *per Saltum*. And sure this spreading Contagion has been so destructive to the Church, that it were to be wisht, the meer titular Christians had rather remain'd such, than thus to have averted others from being so much.

AND now if all these scandals be worth our regret, if the emboldening and exasperating the *bad*, the corrupting the *innocent*, and the decay of Christian *profession* consequent to both be *formidable Evils*, we know where to charge the *guilt*. Our *contentions* must be arraigned as *accessaries*, if not *principals* in the case: And then sure it will besit our angry Zealots to consider, whether this be the way of *advancing Gods truth*, or *what account they will give to the Lord of the Vineyard*, who while they pretend to dress and prune the *branches*, do thus debilitate and destroy the *roots*.

Nay, indeed in this they are treacherous even to their own pretensions, for all those several Religions which they so tenderly cherish, have no *proper root* of their own, but like *Excrescencies*, spring out of the *main stock* of Christianity, live by its juice and moisture, and consequently, can never hope to survive it. And then certainly there can be nothing more ridiculous, than to express their kindness to the *one*, by ways that are so ruinous to the *other*. 'Tis as if a *Passenger* in a Ship should to fortifie his *private Cabin*, tear up the *planks* and expose the whole Vessel to sinking: Yet thus preposterously do many of our *chief Pilots* apply their care. In the mean time, it cannot but be a very *delightful prospect* to the grand Enemy of Souls, to see us thus busily promote his *interest*, lay *snare*s for our selves, and by our own *folly* do that which all his *subtilties* could never compass. Nor can we think but he will be as *officious* to us as is possible, while we are thus employed, will help us to contrive our *Turrets*, whilst he sees we pluck out *stones* from the *foundation* to build them with; nor shall we ever want *new models* of Churches, so long as they thus help to destroy the *old*; and how aptly they are fitted for that Purpose, needs (I suppose) no farther Demonstration.



## CHAP. XII.

*A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Disputes, in reference to Civil Peace.*

AND now sure we cannot but conclude our *Contentions* highly injurious to *Christianity*, that thus assault it both in the *Practick* and *Theory*: And indeed how fierce soever our quarrels are with one another, the heaviest blows are sure to fall on that, which as in its constitution is of the most *Pacifick* temper imaginable, so it has the common fate of reconcilers to suffer from all parties. But *Godliness* having the promise as well of this life as of that which is to come, it often happens that there is such a consent between our *spiritual* and *secular* Concerns, that the Mischiefs that oppress the one do reflect on the other: And indeed Religion when entire and united, is one of the best bonds of *Civil* as well as *Ecclesiastical* Peace, (as even those attest, who defying all other ends of it, do yet admit it a useful state Engine;) from whence 'tis consequent, that the *distractions* and *divisions* in that must have proportionably a contrary influence, and infect communities with *Discord*, *Tumult* and *Disorders*. And this is an effect with which I think not unfit to bring up the rear of the foregoing Mischiefs, it being not so purely *Secular* as not to

suit our present subject; for *outward order* and *unity* can never be so innocently disturb'd, but that *Christianity* must be wounded in it also: And besides, it may perhaps obtain more consideration than the former, as being of a nature wherein the generality of men will think themselves the most concern'd; for though there be many that can look on the ruine both of Christian practice and profession, with *Gallio's* indifference, *Acts* 18. 17. and care for none of those things, yet when the siege draws closer, when they find themselves begirt in their worldly interests, and that the same Deluge that overwhelms *Churches*, may bear down *Palaces* also, perhaps they may think the matter not so contemptible. And first, as to the truth of the observation the *World* has too long groaned under the *Experiment* to need farther proof. That *bitterness* which first tainted the *waters of the Sanctuary*, hath from thence diffus'd its self into our *common streams*, and like the *Egyptian Plague*, left none uncorrupted: For whether we look upon Families, Neighbourhoods, Kingdoms, any the *least*, or any the *greatest* Societies, we find the miserable *Trophies* of our *holy Wars*, in *Factions* and *Confusions*; I wish I could not say *Rapine* and *Blood* also. For the *first* of these, the domestick Jarrs caus'd by different Opinions, the *Instances* are numerous, or rather innumerable, which our *own age* and *nation* affords us. How many Servants have on this score been at defiance with their Masters? Children with their Parents? nay, Wives with their Husbands?

Husbands? Such an unhappy force is there in *mistaken Zeal*, that it dissolves the *closest bonds*, violates all *obligations* natural or civil, while under pretence of service to God, like the *Pharisees* Corban, it evacuates all duty to man; and this has made such ruptures and divisions in Families, that that delightful prospect the *Psalmist* so much commends, that of *Brethrens dwelling together in unity*, *Psal. 133.* is scarce any where to be met with; but instead of that, such rancor and bitterness, treachery and malice, as if men either mistook Christs *prediction*, *Luke 12. 52.* for a *precept*, or at least were willing to advance his *Prophetick Office* upon the ruine of his *Kingly*, and to verifie his *presage* by breaking his *command*. And as the Oeconomical order and peace is thus disturb'd, so if he that misses quiet *at home* should seek for it *abroad*, he will soon find himself disappointed, and discern that as the *societies* grow greater, so do the *disorders* also, and that private Strifes do as much combine to make *parties* and *faCTIONS*, as Families do to make *Cities* and *Corporations*. By this means that mutual communication by which the Members of civil bodies should not only benefit one another, but secure the whole is interrupted, and men live not as *neighbours* but *spies*, always upon designs of Entrapping and Ensnaring, for while they look on one another as *enemies to God*, they think that rescinds all obligations of *friendship among themselves*, and when Religion bears the *Standard*, the *War* will be concluded necessary and honourable.

able. But though it be so in *imagination only*, 'tis sure there are some, who make it *really profitable*; for as in most *Camps*, the greater Number are attracted rather by hope of *booty* than concern for the *cause*; so here, many men *list* themselves under one Party, that they may have pretence to *prey* upon the rest. And to that End several very commodious *Axioms* have been taken up. As that *no faith is to be kept with Hereticks*; that *Dominion is founded in Grace*, &c. by such measures as these the goods of the *Agyptians* become lawful prizes to any, that please to call themselves *Israelites*; and indeed *Jews* they may be call'd in that notion we vulgarly use it of *unjust* and *cruel extortioner*: But sure not such *Israelites* as Christ defines *Nathaniel*, *Jo. 1. 47. without guile*: For having thus consecrated their *frauds*, and found an expedient of serving *God* and *Mammon* together, there is no piece of *deceit* either too big, or too little for them; no *transaction* so important, which can oblige their *fidelity*; none so trivial as to discourage their *rapine*: Opportunity is the only measure and rule of their attempts, by this means no *Obligation* of Contract, no *Laws* of Commerce can escape unviolated, every thing is lawful that may weaken the wicked, and that *zeal* which makes men *Saints* in the Church or Conventicle, can make them *Thieves* in the Shop or Market. Thus is Piety made an Engine of rapine, and by these *religious riots*, all *boundaries* wherewith *Laws* or *Equity* have fenc'd mens distinct *properties*, are thrown down: And sure this

this is a most carnal consequent of our spiritual debates, and bids fair towards the reducing us to that state of common Hostility, which some have phancied to be the *Original condition* of mankind: For it renders commerce so dangerous, that men may within a while think it safer to trust their own *strengths*, than to the shelter of those *Laws* and *Civil compacts*, which they see so avowedly evacuated. And upon this account, though the Injury be immediately done to *private* persons, it becomes a *publick* mischief: Yet alas, these are but the more moderate *effects* of our Dissentions; they afford more expedite and compendious ways of publick ruine; the *defrauding* or *undermining* of a few Neighbours, are *petty prizes* for those that think they have the sole right to the Creature, and are those *Meek* who are to *inherit the Earth*, and every such acquest only serves to flesh them for a farther chase. The *spoils* of a broken Kingdom will afford something worth the *scrambling* for: And nothing more fit to *break it* than a pretence of Religion, which like the *stone* that smote *Nebuchadnezzars* Image, has shivered the most goodly Monarchies. And accordingly, we see no *Engine* is more constantly us'd by men of Seditious spirits, to disturb and subvert Governments: Indeed there can be nothing so advantageously fitted for the purpose. For should such persons unmask their *design*, and shew it in its *native ugliness*, should they avow the shaking of a Kingdom meerly to establish themselves in a condition of *wealth* and *grandeur*, the new moulding

moulding of a Government only that they might shape their own shares in it, 'twere impossible they should find any abettors; for though the *multitude* are always in preparation for *change*, yet 'tis not on Intuition of benefit to some *private persons*, but of somewhat wherein *themselves* may partake: Nor is even the madness of the people mad enough, to expose all their *own interest*, and most important concerns only to promote *those of others*. It has therefore always been both the rule and practice for such designers to suborn the *publick interest* to countenance and cover their *private*; to cry up *Diana* to secure their own gain, and to make the seduced *Populacy* like the *Jackal* to the *Lion*, hunt that prey which themselves mean to devour. And of all those artifices by which such *Incendiaries* have set Kingdoms in a *flame*, none has been more universally successful than the *prætext* of Religion, which is thought so *creditable a cause* to engage in, as can convert the *infamous titles* of Rebel and Traitor into those of Patriot and Saint, and consequently, take off all discouragement arising from the disreputation of such an enterprize: And no less potent is it in solving the scruples of its unlawfulness; for by a dexterous anticipation, it makes *Conscience* a *party*, that it may exclude it from being *judge*, and by that one fallacy of supposing *Religion* to be *a just ground of quarrel*, make way for all the wild consequences deducible from that *false principle*: And indeed where that is thoroughly fastned, the *mischiefs* are not only *great but incurable*, & yet the  
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more so by how much the person is more zealous. For alas, what will it avail to tell such a man, 'tis a sin to *fight against his King*: when he will tell you 'tis a greater not to *fight for his God*: That he contracts a *heinous guilt* in violating the *peace* of the Church, when he with as great confidence believes, he *merits* in propagating its *truth*. That he is accountable for the *bloud* of his Brethren; when he thinks he has like the *Levites*, Ex. 32. consecrated himself in it, and offer'd it an acceptable *sacrifice* to God. Thus unhappily are these men fortified in their *sin*, by presuming it their *Virtue*, and while the *furious zeal* of such is made subservient to the *wicked craft* of others, 'tis a most *apt instrument* of publick Mischief, there being no attempt so desperate, which such may not be put upon, who are methinks us'd as *Hanibal* is said to have done those Oxen, whose *horns* he first fired, and then sent them to disturb the *Roman camp*: These *men* as those *beasts* are found very useful for the molesting of others; but commonly all they acquire to themselves, is the *smart* of their own *flames*. Few of those who thus in the simplicity of their heart follow an *Ab-solom* or a *Sheba*, that do not either miscarry together with the *design*, or else live to discern how much their *credulity* was abused; and that both *religion* (however pretended) and those that fought for it, were only made *properties* to promote the *lusts* of those who despised both. But 'tis unnecessary to insist farther on the *effects* of such religious Fury, of which *we of this Nation*  
have



have had so many and so *costly evidences*, as far transcend the most *tragical descriptions*. God grant we may never have other than our *past experiences* to measure them by: But certainly there is little reason to be secure, so long as the *root* of them, our *speculative differences* daily encrease; for unless we could suppose an Age of such innocence, that there should be none who would *take* any undue Advantages, 'tis sure there will be enough *given*: And indeed when we reflect upon our past Distractions, and consider how trivial the *matter* of most of those Debates was, whose *manner* has been so cruelly solemn; how our slightest *problemes* have been writ in *bloud*, that many Thousands have been made *naked* to keep the *Surplice* off a few mens backs, and we have pulled down our *Churches* in displeasure at the *windows*, when I say these and a Thousand the like are considered, we must conclude that there can never *want* Occasion to them that (in the *Apostles* Phrase) *desire* Occasion. The *lightest distempers* in the Church being *contagious*, and most apt (when fomented by ambitious designers) to beget an *universal Plague* in the Common-wealth. And now who can without horror consider these miserably perverted *effects* of Christian Religion, that *that* which was design'd the most *inviolable bond of unity*, should like those curls of entangled snakes with which *Erinnys* is said to have infuriated *Athemis* and *Ino*, become the *fatal incendiary* of the mortallest hatred. That *that* *Oeconomy* which was meant to *regulate*, should be the Instrument of confounding and embroyling the World; and

a Gospel of Peace should thus be made the *Incentive to war*, and create fiercer quarrels than those it was to have compos'd. To turn the *Grace of God into wantonness*, is justly branded as a great Crime, but sure to turn it *into malice* is yet a greater. And though every sin offers violence to our religion, yet *this* is of all others the most barbarous, thus to make it Assassinate its self, become a kind of *Felo de se*, and contribute to its own ruine. And that this is the case, is I presume sufficiently evident in all the foregoing instances, which as they are most obviously the effect of our eager Disputes, so are they no less visibly destructive to Christianity in all its interests, leaves it neither root nor branch, neither inward Vigor, nor outward Luster; so at once rendring it both unfertile and unamiable. 'Twas a piece of hostile Severity against Moab, to fill the land with stones, thereby to render it barren, 2 King. 3. 25. The slingers went about, and smote it: but what *that* suffered from profest Enemies, the Church daily sustains from those that call themselves her best friends. Our Benjamites are so in love with their skill of slingling to a hairs breadth, their nice Criticisms, Distinctions, and Subtilties, have cast abroad so many stones of contention, that the Church is become perfect quarry, utterly sterile and unfruitful; as to all those good works for the production whereof, she was so peculiarly fenced and cultivated by God; nay, 'twere well if barrenness were the worst, and that she had not on the other side acquir'd an unhappy  
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*degenerous fertility*: But what a numerous and accursed Issue spring from this unpeaceable temper, the foregoing considerations do too sadly demonstrate; and I doubt not every attentive Observer will be able to add *more* (though not *truer*) Instances; and besides to discern that this *spurious brood* like that of *Hagar* is grown so wantonly insolent as to despise the *right heir* of the Promise. The true *Gospel Graces* of Meekness, Peaceableness and universal Charity are accounted *Earthy phlegmatick qualities*, we disclaim that *Holy Ghost* which descends in the appearance of the *Dove*, nay or in *fire* either, unless it be like that of *Elijah*, to consume all that disgust us. Nor do we measure our *Religion* so much, by the opposition it makes to our *lusts*, as to those whom we first make, and then call our *enemies*. Thus miserably have we changed the Scene, and by calling *evil good*, and *good evil*, have accumulated injuries upon our oppressed Christianity, not only rob'd it of its *rule*, but of its *reputation* also. And do we daily thus see *Ishmael* mocking *Isaac*, and shall we not think it time to cast out the Bond-woman and her Son? shall we for ever cherish this generation of *Vipers* to tear out the *bowels* of our common Mother? I pray God the Question have not as much of *presage* as *expostulation*. For if we consider the present state of things, how our *contentions* plead not only *right* but *prescription*, there seems not much hope of dispossessing them, and yet less, when 'tis remembered, how they have entwisted themselves,

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not only with the *passions*, but *interests* of men; two such *potent Abettors* as will buoy up the most *forlorn cause*. The truth is, there are many *subterraneous springs* which feed this *Ocean*, and though religion and piety be on all hands demurely pretended, yet as we have seen the *effects* of our debates very *disconsonant* to such a *Profession*; so if we examine the *originals* and *causes*, we shall find them for the most part as *widely distant*. It may not be amiss to take a short view of some of them; for though I cannot hope the *discovery* of the *Causes* will contribute to the *general cure*, yet perhaps it may prove *Antidote* to some particular persons, who will be the less apt to admire the verdure of the *leaves* (the flourishing appearances of *zeal* and *piety*), when they find both *fruit* and *root* of so poisonous a quality.

### CHAP. XIII.

*A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; and first, Pride.*

**A**ND in this inquest we find *Pride* already arraigned to our hands, by the wisest of Men, Prov. 13. 10. *only by pride cometh contention*. It is indeed a most prolifick vice, and there are few *sins* to which it is not either a *parent* or *nurse*: but there is scarce any

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which does more betray its immediate descent from it than this of *strife* and *debate*, which has so many of the *lineaments* and *features* of the deform'd Mother, as sufficiently attest its *extraction*. And as this is true of *all* strifes in general, so particularly of *those* whereof we now treat: for Pride being its self an internal sin, it has such a neighbourhood with all the notions and speculations of the mind, that it easily makes impressions on them: Nor are we to wonder that the Sacredness of divine things is not *Amulet* enough against its *Charms*, when we remember that the *first act* of Pride that ever was committed, was levelled even at God himself; and as it took up its first seat in a spiritual substance, so has it ever since, never acted more *naturally*, and therefore more *vigorously* than about spiritual matters. Of this the Church in all ages has had many costly Experiments, for if we trace the Catalogues of Heresies from *Simon Magus* his daies down to our own, we shall find Pride a *principal Actor* in every *Scene*, though perhaps in *various dresses*. For though Pride be alwaies in the general an affectation of some transcendency, yet it differs as to the particular object, according to the several estimates men make of excellencies. So that the *propugners* of new Opinions, though they have this *common aim*, that they seek their *own exaltation*, yet do not alwaies do it in the *same instances*. For example, *some* have coveted the repute of *profound inquisitors*, and this Vanity has prompted them to dive so deep into the

the bowels of every the plainest doctrine, till at last they have twisted and entangled them into the most perplexing difficulties. These Navigators think they have never fail'd successfully till they have found out a *Terra incognita*, though God knows they bring nothing from thence for the benefit of the habitable world; nor make it their business to resolve Doubts, but start them. Another sort of men there are of so fastidious and petulant wits, that they disdain an opinion of which themselves are not the Authors; they love not to have their understandings prescrib'd to, by the preconceptions of others, how divinely soever inspir'd, and will rather have a Religion of their own making, than of his whom they pretend to worship. And this, 'tis to be doubted is the bottom of the great veneration some have paid to Reason, which they have set up in the Throne, not only in defiance of blind implicit assent, but even of divine revelation. But in the mean time 'tis to be observ'd, that 'tis not reason in general, the common excellency of our nature that is thus advanc'd, but every mans own private and individual; which upon a just scanning will often be found the most distant thing from what it is call'd: Passion and Phancy; by that omnipotent advantage of being a mans own, often passing for deep discourse and ratiocination: and what a fruitful harvest of Tares such seed is apt to produce, our reason would inform us if our experience did not. To these we may add another rank of men, who vehemently thirsting after a name in the

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world, hope to acquire that by being the *disseminators of novel doctrines*; they think while they go on in the *beaten track*, they shall be obscur'd in the *Throng*; the only way to make themselves conspicuous is to be singular: Thus fondly chusing to be *eminent*, though by the infamous Characters of *Heretick* or *Schismatick*, and (like him that fired *Diana's Temple* to secure himself from oblivion) build themselves *Monuments* of the *Churches ruins*: and sure this *Theudas* his ambition of being some body, has helpt to raise more *opinions* than he did *men*. Yet commonly it answers it even in that circumstance also; for when by *separating themselves* from the *unity of the faith*, they have rendred themselves remarkable, their next aim is to have *others joyn* to them; and so they may have the honour of being *leaders*, care not though it be into the ditch. To be call'd of men *Rabbi Rabbi*, is enchanting Musick to any *Pharisee*, and serves like the *Timbrels* in *Tophet* to drown the cries not of their *Ghildren*, but *Mother* scorching in the flames of their contention. Indeed so impetuous and uncontroulable is this kind of *vanity*, that like a mighty torrent, it bears down all before it, overwhelms not only the opposite *vertues*, but even all *vices* that are not of its own confederacy. Men can in this case lay severe restraints upon their most *intimate sensualities*, when they suspect them *treacherous* to this grand Design. The *Wolf* shall be muzzled and made to behave himself with the meekness befitting the *Sheeps* cloathing. The *Swine* shall



shall be washt and by an unnatural violence withheld from the *mire*: All their rapacious and bestial *appetites* controul'd and made tame, that they worry not their *reputation*. And all this for a little naked *popularity*, for whose dear purchase, very many have thought fit to divest themselves, both of lawful and unlawful *enjoyments*; and have thought the tumultuous *applause* of a few factious spirits worth all that *self-denial*. But all Pride is not so perfectly *Camelion* as to subsist upon this *meer air*, there is another kind of it that proposes to its self something beyond this: such is the affectation of rule and dominion, which though in respect of any real good to the ruler, is as very a *Chimera* as the former; yet commonly they that are under such a *Jurisdiction*, find to their cost 'tis more than *Imaginative*. And God knows this *aspiring humour*, has been no less fatally active in *Ecclesiastick* than in *Civil* affairs; nor has the Church ever been in more danger of *Anarchy* than by those who most impatiently coveted a share in its government; for where this spirit of ambition is the Impellent, it does like the *Demoniack* in the Gospel, burst asunder all *fetters* and *chains*, violates the unity both of doctrine and discipline, nor is any attempt too bold for men thus animated: They who long to be in authority think the *door* opens not quick enough for their entry, and impatient of so tedious an expectation, chuse rather to make breaches in the *walls* (nay sometimes to undermine the *foundation*) than to want an *access* to

their Desires. Neither is there any thing so sacred, which upon this occasion they cannot prostitute; when *Diotrephes*, 3 *Joh. 9.* seeks preheminance, the Dictates even of an *Apostle* shall be rejected, and even the divinity of *Christ*, *God blessed for ever*, be trampled on, when *Arius* wants a footstool to climb up to his affected greatness. In a word, if we Examine the occurrences of all ages, we shall find that either the eagerness of *acquiring*, or the Revenge of *missing dignities*, have been the great *instigators* of Ecclesiastick Feuds; and sure our *Modern* stories, are not likely to fall short of the *Ancient*, in examples of this kind. And as Pride makes *some* thus passionately desirous of rule, so it makes *others* as impatient of being ruled, and even those who cannot hope to arrive to *give* Laws, will not endure to *be under* those already established. That *this* is indeed the Christian *liberty* for which many in our daies have so unchristianly contended, is too apparent, the *fundamental quarrel* has been against *subjection*: Yet to countenance and abett that, whole *Armies* of frivolous cavils have been rais'd, and the *Church* attacked in every its remotest concern, and though there be nothing farther from that unity of mind, to which the simile was first affixt, yet in a perverse sense it imitates the Ointment of *Aaron* in descending from the head to the skirts of the cloathing: not only the *supreme* and more *eminent parts*, but the most *slight extrinsick* and *inferior relatives* to Religion being aspersed and depraved; and the most *innocent Circumstances*

cumstances of Civil or Natural actions made *criminal*, when applied to Divine things. A strange *infective power*, which these men have convey'd into Gods service, that it must thus pollute every thing that approaches it. That the place where his Honour dwells, must become a *Pesthouse*, and diffuse *contagion* to all in it. (I wish by the way their *Sacrilege* had not been too valiant in despising the Danger of those *infected utensils*, which may perhaps sadly verifie the reproach, and prove *treacherous prizes*) and when mens *zeal* operates thus unkindly, when the pretence of *internal sanctity* devours all *outward decency*, and God is to be honoured and exalted by those ways, whereby *men* would think themselves affronted, and vilified; we have too great reason to think such a zeal as little according to *godliness as knowledge*, and that it is not so much the *tenderness* of their Consciences, no nor generally the *weakness* of their Brains, but the *Iron sinew* in their Necks, which makes them at once so scrupulous, and so clamorous; for though the former might be suppos'd owing to Error, the latter can surely proceed from nothing but Pride. Several other instances might be given to shew how that pernicious temper has contributed to the rise and first being of our divisions; and having thus given them birth, it does not like the *Ostrich* abandon its Brood, but has as great an influence in the *cherishing and maintaining*, as it had in *creating* them. Of this there need no other proof than the meer *nature* of Pride, which as it

averts nothing more than *self-condemnation* ; so upon pain of that appearance, 'tis irreversibly engag'd in the pursuit of its first undertakings, any *desisting* being interpretatively a *confession* either of an Error or a Defeat, both which are insupportable to an assuming temper : So that besides the *original incentives* forementioned, it has this of *disdain* superadded to actuate its motions. And accordingly we find they are at this rebound the more violent, not only the *success*, but the *credit* of the first enterprize depending upon a vigorous prosecution : So that *Catilines Maxim* of *Villany* seems to have been adopted into some mens *divinity*, and they think past Crimes are only to be secur'd by more and greater. Nor is it only *hope* to atchieve their *design*, or hide their *shame* which thus animates them, *despair* will do it to a yet higher degree. Our Concupiscible and Irascible appetites dwell not so remote, but they are ready reserves to one another, and what was *desire* in the pursuit, becomes *anger* and *revenge* in the disappointment ; and sure we need not be told the wild effects of those passions. How many men have in a *furious despair* over-acted even their own *projects*, and have made it a malicious consolation in their ruine, to get it attended with that of the publick ? As *Herod*, who to secure a *lamentation* at his death, commanded a *Massacre* should accompany it, or (to give a more Ecclesiastical instance) like *Aerius*, who sought the abolishing of that order in the Church, whereof himself could not partake. I wish no mans *Conscience* in

our days were qualified to suggest a fresher example. But whilst 'tis so many ways the *interest* of Pride to abet our *contentions*, we cannot think it so sluggish or unindustrious an *agent*, as not to find out *expedients* for its purpose. I shall not attempt to give a particular of its *instruments*, when I have said that *Schism* is one of them, I need not add more, since that alone serves both to *complete* and *perpetuate* the Mischief of all our speculative dissentions. How close a Band of concord the *communicating in holy duties* is, we may learn by *Jeroboam*, who seems so well to have understood its unitive efficacy, that he durst not trust the newly divided *Tribes* in a joynt resort to the Temple; and therefore least the *rupture* he had made in the State should close again, he thinks it necessary to make *another* in the Church, and secure his defection from his *Prince*, by that from his *God*. – But we need not borrow a *testimony* from that his impious *Policy*, we have a more *Authentick attestation* from the holy *Psalmist*, who when he would describe the *greatest entireness*, Exemplifies it by the *walking to the house of God as friends*, *Psal. 55. 14*. And the *Apostle* goes yet higher, and from our common *participation* of the *Eucharist*, infers not only our *union*, but our *incorporation*. *We being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread*, *I Cor. 10. 17*. And then sure we may on the contrary conclude, that our *separation* must have the quite distant effects; alienate our *affections*, and by that means still more estrange our *Judgements*.

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For besides that 'tis natural to men to think they can never run far enough from that they begin to loath, they are in their own defence to amplify the *differences*, that they may acquit themselves from the *scandal* of a causeless separation, and this God knows is the usual Method among us, when we have broken *communion*, our only study is not how to *repair*, but *justify* it. The adversaries *Tenets* are rigourously scanned, new *Charges* exhibited, and the *Schism* defended upon those later discoveries, which were no motives to the making it. And then sure no man can doubt but this is a *proper way*, both to *multiply and Eternize disputes*; and 'tis abundantly manifest, that vanity and elation of mind is the cause that Men thus prefer a *mistaken reputation*, before their own *innocence* or the Churches *peace*. Indeed if we thoroughly consider it, we shall find *Pride* is one of the fatallest instruments of *Excision*, the *two-edg'd sword* by which adverse parties do mutually cut themselves from one another. The very *elements and constitutive parts* of a Schismatick, being the *Esteem of himself*, and the *Contempt of others*. I am not as this *Publican* was, we know, the voice of the proud *Pharisee*, whose very name signifies *separation*, and our modern *Separatists* do but Echo the same note, when they pronounce all those *Heretical* or *Carnal* from whom they have withdrawn. Or perhaps they derive from a yet more ancient president, those of whom the Prophet *Esay* speaks, *Esay 65. 5.* which say, *Stand by thy self, come not near me, for I am holier than thou;*

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an Insolent kind of language which the *Cathari* in the *primitive times* did not more exactly transcribe, than many *Sects* of differing denominations have done in *ours*. But 'tis to be remembred, that while the *Pharisee* lookt so fastidiously on the poor *Publican*, he renounc'd communion in prayers much more acceptable than his own; and those *refined Zealots* who fear'd *contagion* from the approach of their more innocent Brethren, could boldly venture on the *pollutions* of the most detestable Idolatries: And God knows the note has too ready an application in both instances. In the mean time 'tis a sad contemplation, that so much of that *zeal* which makes such a glistering in the World, shall when brought to the Touch, be found *adulterate*, that the transcendent *purity* men boast of, should prove but a more sublimated *wickedness*, and their *pretence* to spirituality be verified only in *spiritual pride*. Alas, is not the whole *circuit* of Secular things wide enough to contain this *swelling humour*? Are there not *Pomps* and *Vanities* of the world enough to entertain this one *Lust*, but must this *Moabite* be brought into the *Sanctuary*? Can we not be *elevated* enough unless we *trample upon* all that is holy, and make *Religion* Factor for our *Ambition*? We find some very confidently point out *Antichrist* upon the strength of this one prædicted circumstance, that he was to *sit in the Temple of God*. But what need we travel beyond the *Alps* to find out that, which *every where* presents its self? Our *Pride* does too unhappily answer the description; and though  
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there is no instance wherein it can cease to be *Antichristian*, yet surely it is more eminently so, when it thus usurps *Gods seat*, and rules in Sacred things. Would God the *pains* and *animosity* which has been spent in discovering and reviling *other* Antichrists, had been diverted to the pulling down of *this*, the labour would have been more effectual even to the immediate end of the Designers; for were this Pride *Eradicated*, the Foundation of all Spiritual usurpations were *undermin'd*. But alas, those who exclaim the most loudly against all *foreign Tyranny* on their Consciences, do obsequiously bow to this *intestine Usurper*, make an entire dedition of themselves, and submit to the severest and ignoblest *vassallage*. They have invested it with so absolute and sovereign a Power, that (as *Samuel* warns the *Israelites* of their King, 1 *Sam.* 8.) they are not to call any thing their own when it is useful to its service: All their powers, all their interests are devoted to it, and that not only to adorn its *pomp*, but to fight its *battels*. Men quarrel and contend till not only *themselves*, but even *Christianity* its self expire in the contest. But if it be indeed certain that every *War* is so far unjustifiable, as are the *causes* of it, 'twill surely be a competent prejudice against our contentions, that our Pride is so much concern'd in them, which is so unchristian a *motive*, as all the *holy-water* wherewith men have sprinkled it, can never baptize into a *cleanness*; all the *borrowed dresses* of Zeal and Sanctity, however they may *disguise*, can never  
legitimate

*legitimate* it. Those Arts of concealment may indeed add a *new guilt*, that of *Hypocrisie*, but can never expiate, no nor extenuate the *old*: And how *Saint-like* a form soever our *Vain-glory* puts on, it does but the more own its derivation from *him*, who can *transform himself into an Angel of light*, whose aspirings have first subverted *himself*, and now go on to propagate both his Crime and Ruine to *us*; nor has he ever manag'd that *design* with more Art or Success, than by thus making our Pride a *partition wall* to divide us from *one another*, and consequently from *God* too; who being, as our Church styles him, the *author of Peace and lover of Concord*, can never joyn himself with the *disturbers of both*, but must necessarily be disoblinded by our Dissentions and Schisms.

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CHAP. XIV.

*A survey of the Causes of Disputes; Secondly, Curiosity.*

IF now we proceed farther in our enquiry we shall find, that another grand *incendiary* of our Disputes is *Curiosity*: A vice which though in some respects it may be reckoned a *species* of the former, that of Pride, yet in others it admits a *distinct consideration*. This is that baneful weed which the Devil made a shift to steal even into *Paradise*, and which has ever since affected

fects the *richest soils*, the most pregnant and polite Wits; nor did it only eject *man* from thence, but it has improved the *original curse*, and multiplied those *briers and thorns* among which he was cast, yea, transplanted them from the *Earth*, where they could only raze the skin, into the *Brain*, where they pierce and torture the intellectual and immortal Part of Man. Nay farther, even that *sweat of his brows*, which was to extirpate them from the *ground*, serves but to water and cherish them in his *mind*; his very *industry* being in this case the extremest *ill-husbandry*, and the more *pains* he takes, the farther he removes himself from all *real advantages* of his toil.

T H E R E are some parts of *Knowledge* which God has thought fit to seclude from us, to fence them not only as he did the interdicted *Tree*, by Precept and Commination, but with Difficulties and Impossibilities; made it not only our *sin* and danger, but our *Folly* and madness to attempt them. Of this kind are the Mysterious parts of our *Religion*, which he shews us as it were a-far off to exercise our *faith* and *reverence*, but stoops them not to our *sense* and *disquisition*. These he has placed like the *Sun*, where they may influence, not annoy; warm, not scorch us. And would we still permit them to remain at that safe and wholesome *distance*, we should find none but *benigne effects*; but so importunate are the instigations of *Curiosity*, that no *bounds* will keep us from the *Mount*: We will needs break through into the *thick darkness*, how dreadful soever the  
thunders

*thunders and lightnings* are in the way. Like bold *Phaetons* we despise all *benefits* wherewith the Father of light and us can court us; unless we may guide his *Chariot*; and we moralize the *Fable* as well in the tragicalness of the *event*, as the insolence of the *undertaking*; this unhappy Curiosity having not only ruin'd many of the *inquisitors*, but set the whole *world* also in a *conflagration*. Nor is this temerity more *fatal* in its Success, than *impious* in its Foundation: For besides that, it is a direct *invasion* of Gods peculiar, and *violation* of his Command, it does evidently imply a *distrust*, either of his Wisdom or his Goodness; supposes him either ~~to~~ *ignorant* of the strength of those faculties himself has made, that he has assigned them unproportionable objects, and so they must have new work cut out for them by our selves; or else presumes his *Eye evil* towards his own Creatures; that as the *Devil* once suggested to our *first Parents*, he fears the rivalry of poor mortals, and by an envious detention of some parts of felicity, like one that had been Bountiful only upon surprise and *incogitancy*, illiberally retracts and contradicts his *original design* of making Man completely happy. Nay, indeed this represents him unkind, not only to us his created Images, but even to that Eternal and express image of his Person, *the Son of his bosom*, who may well be thought to have been, as despised in his Eyes, as he was once in ours, *Esay 53. 3.* if he have so cheaply expos'd him for their sakes, to whom he denies any of those *intellectual advantages*, which  
difference

difference *them* from *Beasts*. Thus wickedly curious are we, that rather than converse with *vulgar ordinary things*, we create *prodigies*, put *new forms* upon him that is *unchangeable*, rob *divinity* of its most inseperable *attribute*, and not only *disobey* God, but *reproach* him. And then 'tis no wonder if that which affords so little *glory* to God, hath no more *good-will* for Men, and that which thus wars with *Heaven*, leave little peace on *Earth*. Indeed if we will be building our *Babels*, and thus assault *Omnipotence*, 'tis but just we should have our *language confounded*, and that that *knowledge* for which we boldly attempt to rifle Gods cabinet, should like the *Coal* from the Altar, serve only to embroil and consume the *sacrilegious invaders*. Yet besides what is owing to divine vengeance in the case, the thing has in its self a proper, natural efficiency toward it; for when so many men are engag'd in a *blind search*, 'tis not imaginable they should all *stumble* upon the same Notions, and supposing them to fall upon *variety*, 'tis impossible but mens fond overweening of their own conceits and petulant disdains of others, will improve that *variety* into Opposition, and that *opposition* into set and Solemn Feuds. And God knows, the Church is too effectively acquainted with this *fatal gradation*, and can experimentally attest the *unhappy propriety* of this sort of Curiosity towards the engendring of *discord* and *confusion*.

BUT besides this *higher* rank of things which God hath set so much *above* us, there are others

others of an *inferior* sort, as much *below* us, which are concealed from us, not for their *sublimity*, but their *usefulness*; for as God on the one hand remembers that we are but *flesh*, unable to bear the nearer approaches of *divinity*, and so talks with us as once with *Moses* through a cloud: So on the other he forgets not that *he breathed into us the breath of life*, a vital active spirit, whose motions he expects should own the dignity of its *original*, and as it was its self an *emanation* of the Essential Goodness, should aim at only *real* and *solid good*, and not evaporate and exhaust its powers in *mean* and *impertinent pursuits*. And upon this score also, he has found it necessary to hide many things from us, not that they would *dazzle*, but *misemploy* our Eye; not *swallow* up our Understanding, but *divert* our Attention, from what is more important: Of this sort are those many thin *aerial speculations*, the certain knowledge whereof would bring us no real advantage, make us at all the wiser to Salvation; yet such a value does our *inquisitive Nature* set upon every thing for its being *hid*, that as if our Life were bound up with these Secrets, and all our Felicity dwelt in the Shade of these recesses, we pursue this search with indefatigable *industry*, ransack all corners with as great *diligence* as the *Woman* for her lost piece of Silver, *Luk. 15. 8*. And as if this were indeed the *treasure* hid in the field, sell *all* that we have, lay out our whole *selves* upon the *purchase*. Indeed he that shall consider what solemn Disquisitions

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there are upon the slightest, and inconsiderablest Subjects, with what Advertence and concern Questions of this kind are bandied in the world, must wonder how men can at once be so *serious* and so *trifling* ; or that those who can say *so much*, should not once ask themselves to what purpose they say *any thing*. Yet what multitudes of men are there engag'd in such chases as this ? when alas, the quarry is not worth half the toil, could it be gotten : but what *Solomon* sayes of the *sluggard*, Prov. 12. 27. that *he roseth not that which he took in hunting*, is true of the contrary temper, these *over-busie spirits* whose labour is their only reward, they hunt a *shadow*, and chase the *wind* ; and when they strein to their utmost speed, there is still the wonted Distance between *them* and their *aims* ; all their eager pursuits bring them no acquést ; but after they have traverst so much *ground*, traced all the *mazes* that learned Curiosity could contrive to perplex men, and stied to the weariness of the *flesh*, if not to the quenching of the *Spirit* too, they are still in the same *ignorance* from whence they set out, and 'twere well if they were also in the same *doubtfulness* : But the unhappiness of it is, they acquire a *confidence* without any *true ground* of it ; and get such a Knowledge as may *puff up*, but not *edifie*. This was eminently exemplified in the *Gnosticks* of old, whose vain *Chimeras*, and *foolish questions*, as the *Apostle* calls them, Tit. 3. 9. past with them for such a *superlative wisdom*, as gave them Insolence to discriminate themselves from



from others by that swelling *Title*, and monopolize the reputation of *Science*, which yet if we will believe the great Doctor of the *Gentiles*, and he too brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*, the greatest *Rabbi* of the *Jews*, was *science* falsely so called. And God knows, they want not successors in this as well as in other particulars, men are so possess'd with their own *Phancies* that they take them for *Oracles*, and think they see visions, and are arriv'd to some Extraordinary *revelations* of Truth, when indeed they do but dream *dreams*, and amuse themselves with the *Phantastick Ideas* of a busie imagination. Yet would they only please themselves in the delusion, the *Phrensie* were more innocent; but like the prouder sort of *Lunatics*, they will needs be *Kings* and *Rulers*, impose their wild *conjectures* for *Laws* upon others, and denounce *War* against all that receive them not: And this is that which makes the great combustion, and confusion among us; for while one man *Opines* one way, another another, and each will obtrude his *opinion* on every-body else; 'tis impossible but the *contests* should be sharp and endless; for each man labours under a double Impatience, the *one* of having his own notions rejected, the other of having the quite contrary impos'd on him; and though 'tis true the *reciprocalness* of the Injury ought to allay the *displeasure* at it, yet men so much more consider what they *suffer* than what they *do*, that every one cries out aloud of that hard measure, which him-

self offers without regret. And between *winds* so contrary and so fierce, 'tis no wonder if *storms* arise ; and in such *Tempests* has Religion so long been tossed, that it now needs the interposition of a divine *Miraculous power*, to keep it from sinking ; for alas, these *Skirmishes* expire not with the first Propugners of the Opinions ; they perhaps began as *single Duellers*, but then they soon get their troops about them, have their *partisans* and *abettors*, who not only enhance, but entail the feud to posterity. And indeed this propagation of Strife, both in these *trifling*, and the former more *profound* speculations, is the most fatal circumstance of the whole Case : Were it not for this, though we might have *many Errors*, we could have *no Sects*. And if the Church might be sometimes wounded with the *darts* of single Adversaries, yet she could not be surrounded and besieged with *combinations* and *confederacies*. Some straggling Souldiers might prove *renegados*, but they would not revolt in *troops* and *legions*. We should not have such numerous Parties, who with the greatest violation of Christian unity, denominate themselves, not from the *grand author and finisher of our Faith* ; but from the *first brocher of their Idoliz'd opinions*. In the mean time, 'tis a sad contemplation, that a little *vain curiosity* should weigh so much, or the Churches *peace* so little with us : that we should sacrifice the one, to the *satisfaction* shall I say, or rather to the *whetting* and *inflaming* of the other. But 'tis a yet sadder, that this should chiefly

chiefly be done by those whose *learning* enables, and whose *profession* should devote to the most noble and most profitable Studies; may have the highest obligations to correct those *exorbitances* in others, which with such *Art* and *labour* they propagate and teach. How wounding a spectacle is it to see our greatest *Heroes* like *Hercules* at the *Distaffe*, thus degenerously employed, and to find those who were by Christ design'd for *fishers of Men*, thus entertain themselves like *Children*, with *picking up Shells* and *Pebbles* on the shore; and which is yet more unmanly *wrangling* about them too. Indeed at this rate, 'tis no wonder if they make the *disciples* Complaint, *we have travailed all night and have taken nothing*. This sure is so little the way to win Souls, that he whose business it is to destroy them, can very contentedly refer them to this method; can gladly leave us all our nice and subtle *disquisitions*, upon the very same score that one of the *Gothick* Commanders, advised the sparing of the *Italian Schools* and *Libraries*; Let us, sayes he, leave them their Books, that whilest they amuse themselves with such *follies*, we may subdue them at our *pleasure*. It is the saying of the Wise-man, *there is a wisdom that multiplieth bitterness*; and sure if there be a wisdom acquired by these curious Enquiries, 'tis of this sort, like the Knowledge of Good and Evil attained by our first Parents, which taught them to know the Good only by its *loss*, and the Evil by its *smart*. Indeed our too high, and transcending *speculations*

on the one hand, and our too trivial and unprofitable on the other; are like the *torrid* and *frigid* Zone, the one consumes us with its *heat*, the other chills, and benumbs us with its *cold*; that turns us to *Ginders*, this to *Ice*. These little trifling Notions being too slight an exercise to keep *heat* in our Christianity, which not only expresses but maintains its *life* by strong and vigorous Motions. And therefore between these *two intemperate*, God has provided us an *habitable Clime*, I mean that middle rank of divine truths which tend to practice. Here he would have us dwell and converse, fix our thoughts and studies: Nor need we fear that they are too dry a subject for our contemplation. We see as deep Speculators, as any now assume to be, found it far otherwise. *David* could entertain himself with the *Meditation of God's Law* (not his hidden Decrees or counsels) *all the Day*, Psal.

119. 97, Nay it seems the Matter was so *copious* and *redundant*, that it could not be confin'd within that *narrow boundary* of Time, but invaded the *night* also; forced him to default from his rest, to bestow on his meditations, *I have thought of thy Name O Lord in the night season, and have kept thy Law*, Vers. 55. Neither is it a vain expence of Time, which it thus tempts to, but gives the happiest improvement; lands at that harbour to which all rational studies tend, gives understanding, Vers. 130. *makes wise the simple*, Psal. 19. 7. and this also in an eminent degree, such as set him above his teachers, and his Elders also.

also. *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine Enemies. I have more understanding than my teachers, for thy testimonies are my study. I am wiser than the aged, because I keep thy commandments,* Psal. 119. 98, 99, 100. These are high and liberal Elogies of this divine study: and if any shall seek to divert an unwelcome inference by saying that *David* spoke them only in pious raptures, that they were the transport of his *zeal*, rather than the estimate of his *judgment*; we must resolve the objector far removed from such religious excesses, and under the contrary defect: yet the cause will so well bear an *appeal*, that he may be trusted to consult farther, let him advise with *Solomon*, whose large desires and possessions too of wisdom, must suppose him no stranger to its nature, and he will tell him the very same, and that not in his *devouter extasies*, but in his most *compos'd sedate temper*, when he solemnly seats himself in his School, reads *Ethicks* to his disciples, and professes his design of giving *subtilty* to the Simple, and to the young man *knowledge and discretion*, Prov. 1. 4. for if his whole book of *Proverbs* be scanned, the sum of it will be found to be nothing else but an *exhortation* to the study of this practick Wisdom. Nay when his own *understanding* was improved and advanc'd by *Experience* also, when he had not only *beg'd*, but *bought* wisdom, after he had given his *Curiosity* its full unbounded Range, compassed the whole Universe, and exam-

min'd not only in *contemplation*, but by sensitive *experiment*, whatever therein could pretend to be that good for the sons of Men, *Eccl. 2. 3.* we find after all this busie inquest, he gives up his *verdict* in this form, *Eccles. 12. 13.* Let us hear the end of the whole matter, *Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the Whole Duty of Man*: And now methinks so solemn a decision of the wisest of Men, and he too inspir'd by the Omniscient God, may be thought of weight enough to acquiesce in. Yet since there are some who love not to weigh in the balance of the Sanctuary, and that had rather receive Responses from *Delphos* than from between the *Cherubims*: Let such at least hear even the Heathen Oracle attesting *Socrates* to be the wisest man, because he directed his studies to the *moral part* of Learning, which he did to such a degree, as to disparage all those more *Airy speculations*, which better'd not mens Manners, but were only λόγων ἰόρος, a noise and clattering of Words. And *Pythagoras* his School defines Philosophy, ζωῆς ἀνθρωπίνης καθάρσις καὶ τελειότητα, the cleansing and perfecting of humane life, which two things are said to be done, first by *Virtue*, whose business it is to remove τῆς ἀμυτείας τῶν παθῶν, the inordination of our Passions: Secondly, by *Truth*, which restores εἶδεν εἶδος, the Image and pourtraiture of God. And since this is the joynt suffrage both of Religion and Reason, why should those that pretend to either defie both, and vainly consume themselves in unprofitable searches? Why should men wander to seek beggary and emptiness,

emptiness, who may with far less labour be *rich* at home? Alas, 'tis not *bare knowledge*, how great or universal soever, that can possess us of *felicity*. Were it possible for us to have a window into *Heaven*, to see all the Divine secrets, yet that might be but like the Rich mans prospect into *Abrahams* bosom, while himself was in the *bottomless pit*. They are not only the *gross* and *illiterate* Souls that must feed those *flames*, the most *Aerial* and *Sublimated*, are rather the more proper fuel for an *immaterial Fire*, and the knowledge we carry thither, render us the fitter company for him, who knew every thing but how to keep himself happy. It was at once the Observation and Wonder of *Plutarch*, that whereas God has several *incommunicable properties* as Power and Immortality, &c. these all men aspir'd to, in the mean time neglected that of *Goodness*, wherein he was willing all men should share. And sure there is now cause of the same complaint, we would have Omniscience and all parts of Divinity besides the holiness, yet alas, those without these would prove but fatal acquiescences, and that approach towards being *Gods*, would only make us the more *Devils*. The only advantageous as well as possible way of Assimilation with God is by *purity*, and the means of that an Attentive consideration of those *Divine revelations*, which are to regulate our practice; these at once dispense *light* and *warmth*, direct and revive the Soul: And if men would not exhale *vapours* to cloud and darken them, Eclipse the clearest Truths



Truths by *difficulties* of their own creating, no man could miss his way to Heaven for want of light, and yet so vain are they as to think they oblige the world by involving it in darkness, as if their *Mists* should like that *which Watered the new-form'd Earth*, Gen. 2. 6. supply the place of the *dew* of Heaven. But certainly to all such in their profusest liberalities, we need make no other Request than *Diogenes* did to *Alexander*, desire them only that they will not stand between us and the *Sun*, intercept its rays, and rob us of that which is infinitely better than any thing they can give us. Were this but obtain'd, we should soon discern the inconsiderableness of those things whose effects have been so sadly considerable to Christendom; those many *Chimaras* which we wrangle and fight about, would in this Sun-shine appear but *Motes* that dance in the Air, (though God knows as we manage them, they are the most luxurious Revels to the Prince that rules there.) Were but a *St. Pauls* doctrine thoroughly imbib'd, our Curious Arts, *εὐπρεπὴ γράμματα*, *superfluous unconcerning studies*, would as it happened, *Acts 19.* be supplanted; and our devotion if sufficiently accended, would as theirs, *burn up* innumerable books of this sort. And sure as this would be the *greatest*, so it would be the most triumphant Bonfire Christendom ever saw, as being not only an indication, but a means of the mighty growth, and prevailing of the Word of God, which our vain *Curiosities* serve only to impede and obstruct, while they do as mightily advance *dissensions & animosities* amongst men.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XV.

*A survey of the Causes of Disputes; Thirdly, Interest.*

**B**UT besides these *two*, there is a *third* Fomentor of divisions, which either for its activity or success must not subscribe to either of them, and that is *Interest*. This is the great *Idol* to which the world bows: To this we pay our devoutest homage, give it not only our *knees*, but our *hearts*; and as if the making us rich were a *second* Creation, that could cancel all the obligations of the *first*: We sacrilegiously entitle our profit to all the Prerogatives of a Creator, give it an absolute unlimited dominion over us, allow it to prescribe us all our measures of good and evil; to rule not only our *Reason* but our *Passions* too, (a Sovereignty alas we would never yield to our God) and as if the *giving* us *laws* were not Empire enough, we permit it to impose *Religions* also; for sure they that observe how great an influence it has in *Church* affairs, will conclude it governs more than the *secular* part of the world. And indeed if we look back, we shall find 'tis no *novel* usurpation, but though void of other Title, has the Prescription of *many* ages. Divinity has long since been made the handmaid of Policy, and Religions modelled by  
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conveniencies of State. The golden *Calves* became venerable *deities*, when they were found apt to secure *Jeroboams* Jealousies: And *Machiavils* policy, that *States* should serve themselves of Religion, was a common practice long before 'twas his Rule. And this Example of Communities has been transcrib'd by single Persons. In the Old Testament we find frequent mention of those mercenary Prophets, that turn'd the office into a trade, divin'd for money, nay, sometimes for more contemptible hire, *handfuls of Barley* and *pieces of Bread*: And in the New we see the same motive of Secular advantage had force enough to turn an *Ecclesiastick* into a *Laick*, make *Demas* degrade himself, and desert his Ministry, and as it thus stopt his mouth from preaching the *Truth*, so it open'd those of Others to divulge *Errors*. Such were those deceivers of whom *St. Paul* speaks, *Tit. 1. 11.* who *spake things they ought not for filthy lucre's sake*. So when the same Apostle declaims the most earnestly against the *love of money as the root of all evil*, we find he fetches his proof of that Charge, from its having *made men erre from the faith*, *1 Tim. 6. 10.* And 'tis *St. Peters* prediction, that the most damnable Heresies, even the *denying of the Lord that bought them*, should be introduced by those, who through Covetousness should make *merchandize* of their *Profelytes*, *2 Pet. 2. 4.* and sure the event attests the *presage* to have concern'd more than the Age immediately succeeding, there being none of the subsequent which hath not in some degree assisted its completion,

pletion, nor have we cause to wonder *here-at*, since 'tis obvious to discern the conjunction and dependence between Covetousness and Heresie. For the *Itching ears* the Apostle speaks of, being an *Epidemick disease*, give fair opportunity to every *Mountebank* to try his *Experiments*. When men nauseate *Old* truths, because they are acquainted with them, and embrace doctrines for the very same reason, they should reject them, even because they are *New*: When they love no Teachers, but such as thus entertain them, and are bountiful to none but such as they love; there is little doubt, but there will be *Mints* enough set on work, when the *Coiners* can thus at once *stamp new opinions* for their Disciples, and *Money* for Themselves: And God knows they are not a *few* of our Divisions, that have thence taken *birth*. It will be needless to ravel far into the Records of Elder times, every mans memory will be able to suggest to him too many, and too pertinent instances. Upon which reflection 'twill be too visible, that much of some mens late pretence to *Godlines* was but a real pursuit of *Gain*; and the *new light* serv'd to guide them to their *neighbours Coffers*: And probably many of our Disputes had been superseded, had not the Authors foreseen, that though they lost the *Question*, they should gain what they more sought. A few essays had discover'd how much the *Populacy* were pleas'd with *Novelties*, especially such as at once gratified their *Levity* and their *Pride*, by casting ill reflections on the things or Persons to whom they owed

owed a reverence; and the *liberal contributions* such Teachers met with, serv'd still to invite more *labourers* into that *work*, where without the uneasiness of a long Expectation, their very *seed-time* was their *Harvest*, and by sowing *Tares*, they immediately reaped *Gold*: And 'tis no wonder if such *quick returns* made them *diligent* at the trade, industrious to provide those wares they saw they could put off so well. And would to God we were secure, that *this way* of Traffick were yet at an end, for so long as these *spiritual Merchants* can thus impose on their *credulous Chapmen*, make them buy one mischief with another, and exhaust their *Estates* to endanger their *Souls*, we must not hope our *dissentions* will ever cease, our *flames* ever be extinct, that have so much *matter* to feed them, and such *importunate blasts* to blow them up.

BUT *covetousness* is of too unsatiable a nature to be contented with one way of supply, 'tis like the *Sea*, that receives the *Tribute* of *all Rivers* (though far unlike it in lending any back again) and therefore those who have resolv'd upon the *thriving sort* of Piety, have seldom embarkt all their *hopes* in one *bottom*, nor so depended on the *bounty* of their *Profelytes*, as to neglect other *ways of preying* for themselves. They wanted not providence to foresee, how uncertain a revenue popular benevolence is: That the same giddy and violent *humour*, which had opened their hands *so wide*, might by working another way close them *as fast*; or if their *inclinations* continued, their  
*abilities*

*abilities* might fail; (a thing very possible to those, who have such suckers) or if both these remain'd, yet that they were unlikely to grow in proportion to their own appetites, and therefore found it necessary to have some other reserve; and besides this way of *flattering*, their willing *benefactors* out of part, contrived another of *forcing* their unwilling Neighbours out of all their *possessions*: So making the spoils of some mens *honesty* a richer booty than that of others *folly*. Hence *Shiboleths* found out of Covenants and engagements, to give opportunity of destroying a dissenting brother; by this Art a *fat benefice* became *crime* and *witness* too against its Incumbent, and he was sure to be *unorthodox*, that was worth the *plundering*. Thus alas has the *Altar* of God been attended, or rather invaded by those whose very *approach* was a *guilt*, that qualified them rather to lay hold on its *horns*, than pretend to its *service*; for sure that God, who has declar'd he hates *robbery* for *burnt-offering*, cannot much affect *Robbers* for *Priests*. But this is a Theme so unpleasant I delight not to enlarge on it, and rather wish that the memory of it were so extinct, that it might remain no where but in the penitential Litanies of the Offenders; my design in the present reflection is only to make it an evidence how much *covetousness* promotes our *contentions*, which sure is not more visible any where than in this instance: For where there is a design of supplanting, that necessarily requires another of accusing; (even *Jezabel* her self projects not to seize on *Naboths* Vineyard without

without a precedent *Charge* ) to comply with which necessity, not only the *lives* and *conversations*, but the *doctrines* and *opinions* of our most eminent Divines have been strangely misrepresented, and when that proved not *fence* enough to the *reputation* of their Oppressors, they have thought fit to change the *Scene*, and to combat those *opinions* in their *true shape*, upon which they could not so well fasten their *disguise*. I shall not here need to say with how much, or how little pretext of reason they managed those Disputes : 'Tis enough to my purpose that such Disputes there were, and those founded in the desire of acquiring secular advantages, which sufficiently attests *Interest* to be a potent *Abettor* of our quarrels.

BUT God knows that is a truth of which the *world* affords so many proofs, that we need not confine our selves to this little *Angle* of it, or owe our *convictions* only to our *domestick transactions* ; if we look abroad we shall find it too often exemplified. The memorable *disturbance* given to the Church, as well as State of Germany by the *Anabaptists*, is a pregnant instance ; whose *new opinion* was but an expedient of investing themselves in *new possessions*, and their *second Baptism* but the Solemnity of espousing, not only the *flesh*, but the *world* also, which they had renounced in the *first*.

AND would God they had been the only set of Men, whose *doctrines* were subservient to their *interests*, for such tumultuous and *Plebeian projects*,



jects, though like a *land-floud* they make great spoil at the present, yet soon sink again. Such a vowed and *excessive greediness* devours *its self*, and the *instruments* by which it wrought: so that the defeat of the secular Design, is commonly the routing those Opinions, which were formed for the promoting it. But when the same desire has the advantage of a sober guidance; when *Avarice* puts on the *Canonical habit*, and twists its self not only with the *practice* of Men, but the *doctrines* of the Church; when *articles* of Religion shall be estimated by their *profitableness*, and Ecclesiasticks *dispute*, as Lay-men *fight for Money*; then alas the *mischief* seems fatal, the *disease* so fixt and radicated, as at once discourages, and mocks the attempts of *cure*.

THAT this is the case not only in a particular and private Church, but that which assumes to be the *Universal* and *Catholick* is too apparent. The one Position of the Popes right to dispose Kingdoms, outstrips all other principles of rapine: this is to drive a *whole-sale* trade, when all other petty Merchants, deal but for *parcels*: which as it is a much *bolder*, so is it a more *prejudicial* attempt than the invading of private possessions, and this *Duo gladii*, the double armature of *S. Peter*, a more destructive Engin, than the tumultuary weapon snatcht up by a *Fanatick*: but sure *S. Peter's sword* though once rashly managed by himself, was never design'd to arm his *successors* to invade Kingdoms: This property of it seems rather to have been de-

rived from the *Prætorian souldiers*, who insolently assumed the disposing of the Empire, wherein they at the last arrived to that *impudence*, that after the Death of *Pertinax* they made open port sale of it, αἰχρῶς καὶ ἀτίμως ὥστε καὶ ὅτι ἰδιωτικῶς καὶ κοινῶς, in a base and sordid manner, as if it had been of common marketable wares: I cannot say the Court of Rome transcribes that indecent owning of the traffick; but it has in other instances so well attested its good managery, that 'tis not very credible, that Crowns and Scepters are conferred *gratis*. And to this so advantageous a Doctrine others bear proportion: Those of *Purgatory*, *Indulgences*, and *Supererogation*, are ready instances, wherein the *Affertors* themselves seem to be unanimous in nothing but in a joynt reference to profit; for when they come to minute definitions they vary and disagree; satisfie one another, as little as their common *Antagonists*: and therefore in the Council of *Trent* they prudently chose in their decrees to propose the bare *Articles* backt by the Authority of the Church, and *Anathemas* of the Council, as having by precedent *discussions* of the points in their congregations discern'd the small *accord* that was among themselves, when they descended to *particulars*. And indeed the *Opinions* were so various as to the grounds of the Doctrines, that one would wonder how from so differing *premisses*, they should all inferr the same *conclusion*; were it not that the *conspiration* of Interest was too potent for the *diversity* of Judgment. And sure 'twas a strange deference was

was given to it, when in the matter of *Indulgences*, there was (by the Testimony of their own Writers) four *different* Opinions, and yet all *Catholick*: which moderation towards *Speculative* dissenters, compar'd with the great severity against those that opposed its *Practice*, speaks loud enough that the *Orthodoxy* of the point, lay wholly in the *Profitableness*: and that *Luther* himself had been no *Heretick*, had he busied himself only in such disquisitions, as impeded not the *gain* of that Doctrine. Nor is this merely surmise and conjecture, for if we consult the *memorials* of those transactions, we shall find *this* was the thing that most alarm'd *Rome*, put that Court in almost as great a *commotion* as the *birth* of Christ did *Herods*: and accordingly in their private consults, the closer *cabals* of the Colledge; the *securing* this part of their invaded treasure was the grand *deliberation*, upon which account it was, that when *Adrian* shewed some Inclination to the reforming abuses both in this and other instances, one of his *Cardinals* who better knew the intrigues of affairs, admonisht him against that unskilful piece of *Ingenuity*, not only from the Example of his *Predecessors*, who were resolute never to confess Faults by *mending* them, but by *representing* to him, "That no reformation  
"could be made, which would not notably di-  
"minish the *rents* of the Church, which having  
"four foundations, the one *Temporal*, the other  
"three *Spiritual*, *Indulgencies*, *Dispensations*,  
"and *Collations* of *Benefices*; no one of them

“could be stopped but that one quarter of the  
“revenues would be cut off: What a resemblance this advice carries to the oration of *Demetrius* to his fellow crafts-men, *Act. 19. 25.* I need not stand to demonstrate, but while such considerations as this, bear sway in Church matters, where *Profit* shall be the *Touch-stone* both for faith and manners, we are not to wonder if no *gainful Tenet* be deposited; or *Peace* bought with that which in most mens esteem is of far more value.

AND this is it which ominates sadly as to our divisions with the *Romanists*, were our *differences* meerly the product of Heat and Passion, they would like the *smaller clefts* in the ground, want nothing but a *cooler season* to cement and close them: but when they are thus form'd into an *interest*, become the Design not of *single persons* or *ages*, but of *corporations* and *successions*; the Breach seems like the *scissures* and *ruptures* of an Earthquake, and threatens to swallow all that attempt to close it, and reserves its cure only for omnipotence. Indeed till *spiritual* and *secular* Concerns be reduced into their proper ranks, which are now mixt and confounded, the better to disguise the preposterous subordination of the nobler to the inferior; till we have forgotten the unhappy *Chymistry* of turning *all* even *Religion* its self into *Gold*, we must never hope to get out of the *Furnace*; our *flames* will still grow fiercer, and with this unnatural effect to consume not the *Dross*, but the purer *Metal*. In

a word, till men can sever themselves from their *Avarice* and mean pursuits of gain, they will never cease to separate from their *brethren*. For as the most *sovereign Balsoms* cannot cure a hurt while the *arrow* remains in the flesh: so neither can the most *pacifick Remedies* at all avail, so long as the same *worldly Aims*, which made the wound, still stick in it.

BUT in the mean time 'tis a *Melancholick* consideration that Christianity should be by its Professors thus unworthily prostituted; that the many various and opposite Religions for which we severally pretend so much zeal, should be but divers waies to the same irreligious End; wherein our *Elders* seem to resemble those in the Story of *Susanna*, who when they meant to part with each other, yet did unawares meet by the impulse of the same Lust. We find it moved the *patience* even of the *Lamb of God*, to see his Fathers house made a house of merchandize, though the Traffick was for the furnishing of Sacrifices: with what abhorrence must we think does he now behold those, who drive so much a worse trade in it: who sell not *accommodations* for worship, but the *worship* its self to accommodate their *interests*, and do not only make Gain in the Temple, but of it. A thing the sacrilegious Rapine of our days has made literally true, where besides the *revenues*, the very *fabrick* and *materials* of Churches, have been *marketable ware*: *Judas's* good husbandry has been taken up, and *ad quid Perditio hac?* put as the common Motto

upon every thing that could be sold for *more*, nay sometimes for *less* than *Three hundred pence*. And as *Dionysius* took away the golden beard from *Æsculapius*, to rectifie the indecency of the Sons having a beard when the Father had none: and *Julian* robb'd the Christian altars with this *impious Sarcastm*, ἐν τοιούτοις σκεδάζουσιν ἑταίρηι ὁ Μαρίας εἶδος; that 'twas unfit the Son of *Mary* should be serv'd in *Plate*. So do men now a-days make themselves regulators of holy things, correct the *indecorums* of the sanctuary, that they may rifle its *treasures*. Thus do we see the Apostles affirmation sadly verified that *those who will be rich fall into Temptation, and a snare*, 1 Tim. 6. 9. Such is the greediness of a covetous appetite, that it swallows indiscriminately whatever looks like *prize*, and rather than it want its prey, God *Himself* shall be robb'd. Nay, 'twere to be wisht in this instance, that That were all; but alas he is mockt too, used not only *unjustly*, but *contumeliously*; we thus make him a property to our fordid designs, and when he has profest that he will not be serv'd together with *Mammon*, we attempt that which is yet far more blasphemous, and make him pay service to him with whom he disdains to share it when paid by others.

NEITHER is Covetousness the only *Vice* that serves its interest upon Religion: but as 'tis made a *factor* for that, so is it a *cloak* and *disguise* for many other. Of this the Catalogues of primitive *Hereticks* give sufficient witness; divers whereof as the *Nicolaitans*, *Cerinthians*, *Carpocratians*,

tians and Gnosticks seem to have constituted distinct sects in *Christianity*, only that they might introduce the most bestial parts of *Heathenism*, and pretended an association in *Religion*, when indeed it was in *lust*. How far some of our modern Sects resemble them in this Particular, I will not undertake to pronounce: though there want not those who make *severe*, and not *improbable* Conjectures concerning it. But whether that be the main design or no; 'tis certain both that wickedness, and many other find great shelter among them. He that brings *resolution* to uphold a Faction shall not miss of *Entertainment*, how many or how great vices soever he brings with it; and he that is of a *godly party*, shall in spite of the loudest Guilts be a *godly man*. So *meritorious* a thing is it in some mens account to be *factious*, that it covers the multitude of sins: hence it is that *Criminals* so frequently fly to new Churches for *Sanctuary*: and 'twill still be the concern of such to have so creditable a *Refuge*; and therefore we are not to wonder if *this* Interest combine with the *former* in promoting our Dissentions.

BUT alas, as it advances *those*, so does it our *guilt* too, that have more than on vile End to which we accommodate our Piety: and still implies the greater *affront* to our God, by how many the more and baser *interests* we shroud under his Patronage. Alas, is it not enough as *Job* speaks to *hide our iniquities in our own bosomes*, but must we wrap them in the *Veil* of the *Sanctuary*.



We read that *Goats* once lent a *covering* for the Tabernacle ; but here by an impious Inversion, the Tabernacle must lend a *covering* to the Goats : The most *bestial appetites* be both concealed and preserv'd under the *Shadow* of Religion. *Plutarch* tells us that when *Marcellus* would have consecrated a *Temple* jointly to Honour and Vertue, the *Priests* resisted it, saying, *Two Gods dwelt not in one Church* : and if their *vain deities* exacted such a solemnity of Respect, and would not be Inmates to *one another*, can we think the true God will be content to be made so to all our vilest lusts. This is sure the highest Contumely to the divine Majesty ; and never could the *abomination of desolation* more properly be said to stand in the *holy place* than in *this sense* : for as the *natures* of these Guilts are fitly exprest by *abomination*, so is the effect of them by *desolation* ; they having brought the most fatal mischiefs on the Church.

AND now would God all that are concern'd in this guilt, would soberly ponder the weight of it, There are *two things* of which God has exprest himself peculiarly Tender, his *honour* and his *Church* ; this is the invading him in both ; the exposing the *one* to Reproach and Contempt, and the *other* to Ruine and Destruction ; and doubtless were there nothing of the *former*, this *later* alone must be sadly accounted for. It remains yet a Character of infamy upon *Achan*, that he troubled *Israel* to enrich himself : and on *Balam* that he not only loved the wages of iniquity, but ensnared

*ensnared the people in uncleanness: and sure the same with many aggravations belongs to those, who by the like unworthy practice, have not only rendred the Church a prey to foreigners, but made it so to its self; engag'd one part of it against another, till the whole is so wasted, that our Religion seems now neerer extinction, than our quarrels about it.*

## CHAP. XVI.

*A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; Fourthly, Passion.*

**A** FOURTH grand contributor to our dissentions is *Passion*, which being by God and nature placed in a subserviency to reason, when it quits its *proper station* and assumes *empire*, it must needs disorder and subvert not only the State of the *Mind*, but of *Every thing* upon which it has an Influence. I shall not here attempt any *Philosophical* discourse either of their *nature* or *number*; all that concerns the present enquiry falls under one of these two, our *love*, or our *hate*; and is either Kindness and Prepossession, or Spight and Prejudice: For the *first* of these 'tis a thing which *common experience* attests to be a most forcible corrupter of the understanding, which being by native right design'd a *Judge*, is by this interrupted in its *office*,

office, not permitted to make those impartial Enquiries, on which a right *sentence* should be founded. But ( as it fares sometimes with *Magistrates* in Popular insurrections ) forced to give countenance to its own *violation*, to own not its proper native dictates, but such as are presented to it, by the prejudicate Phancy. And as it thus lays restraint upon the *superior* part of the Mind, keeps the understanding in fetters, so ( to complete the inversion ) it takes off all ties from the *inferior* : Gives not only *licence*, but *incitation* to the other Passions to take their freest range, to act with the utmost impetuosity. And sure there can nothing more be requir'd, to render it a most apt *instrument* of Tumult and Confusion. For when every *opinion* that is taken up, shall instead of *reason* and *argument*, arm its self with *heat* and *violence*, there can be no end of contending. And the truth of this is, God knows, too sadly discernible in our *Church-controversies*, which derive a great deal of their *warmth* and *bitterness* from this Fountain.

OF this prepossession there are two Sorts, the one relating to *Doctrine*, the other to *Persons* ; by the first I mean not a sober constancy to those principles which being first imbibed by *education*, are afterwards retain'd upon *Judgment*, but an eager *tenacity* of Opinions, not so much upon *Truth* or *Evidence*, as upon a confus'd irrational *kindness* ; a *Platonick* love of some *Doctrine* meerly for themselves, and then making them the *Standards*, by which all others are to be measured :

measured: And this kind of Prepossession is no Stranger in the world, there being multitudes of men, who assert opinions with all imaginable vehemence, who can give no better ground of it, but because they like them: And as the wiser sort *chuse* a Tenet, because 'tis *right*, so these conclude 'tis *right*, because they have *chosen* it. And having thus enamour'd themselves of their *Helena*, they expect all should adore, nor can he scape the note of Profaneness that refuses. By this absurd partiality it is that some *doctrines*, which would themselves ill abide the *Test*, are become the *Touch-stone* both of Doctrines and Men, and no Opinion or Person sanctified which bears not this impress. I need not stand to give instances, either of the *Doctrines* or the unhappy influence this espousing of them has had on our dissentions; but indeed this kind of *Prepossession* is oftentimes the *consequent* of another; and this great *veneration* of some Opinions is founded in the *reverence* of their Authors. Men take up a confidence of the *learning* or *sanctity* of a Person, and then all his *notions* are received implicitly, strictly embraced, but not so much as slightly examin'd; and this *admiration* of mens Persons, has in all ages been of huge *mischief* to the Church, has nurst up *private* Phancies into solemn *publick* Errors, and given an unhappy perpetuity to many *Heterodox opinions*, which would else have expired with their *first Propugners*. This seems to have been foreseen by *St. Paul*, when he so earnestly exhorts the *Corinthians* against the ascribing

bing their *Faith*, to their several respective *Teachers*: But sure I am, 'twas sadly experimented by the *succeeding Christians*, who owed many of their *divisions* to it. A pregnant instance hereof was the *Millennium*, which in spite of its improbability prevail'd long, and almost universally against the *Truth* upon the strength of *Authority*. *Papias* a holy man and Scholar of *St. John*, having delivered it, the *esteem* of his Person canoniz'd his *mistake*, and men chose rather to admit a *doctrine*, whose unagreeableness to the Gospel Oeconomy rendred it suspicious, than think an *Apostolick man* could seduce them. And the force of this is yet more considerable, when 'tis remembred that it found *Profelytes*, not only among the *Vulgar*, who are commonly flexible to any new Impression, but among those of a *higher rank*, men that were *lights* in their generation: *Justin Martyr* and *Irenaeus* having own'd the *Opinion*, and intimated it to have been received by many others no less *Orthodox*; and if such a seduction could prevail, so early in those purer times, before mens interests or spleen were adopted into their Religion, and begot voluntary errors, if I say the *meer reputation* of a Teacher, was then singly so operative; we cannot wonder at its efficacy in conjunction with those *auxiliaries*, which worse times have brought in. What concurrence of those there was in the several *Heresies*, which after infested the *Church*, I shall not now examine, but 'tis visible that many of them grew considerable, chiefly from the *fame* of their Authors, thus *Tatianus* upon

on the credit of being *Justin Martyr's* disciple, had an advantage to disseminate his errors, and not only his, but those of *Origen Apollinaris* and *Novatus*, gain'd abettors from the reputed *Orthodoxy* of the Persons, that propos'd them, who having asserted the Faith in *some* points, were qualified the more prosperously to appose it in *others*.

NOR has it been only the mishap of elder times to have felt the mischiefs of such præpossession; the *disease* has still advanced, and every day improved in worse effect, by how much men have more degenerated from *primitive integrity*, so that the *easie* *Profelyte* is now in danger, not only from the *blindness*, but the *treachery* of his guide, and is often led out of the *common road*, as *thieves* draw passengers into *by-ways* for the better opportunity of robbing them: But 'tis not my present business to send *Hue and cry* after them, to examine what the intentions of those *leaders* are, who misguide their tractable admiring *followers*, 'tis enough for my purpose to observe, that those who so deliver up themselves in a blind assent to the dictates of any man, are in his power to be abused by him if he pleases: I shall leave it to others, to estimate the *probability* that they shall not be actually so: But certainly this may be said, that these *later* ages have beyond all the former given Opportunities of seducing to any that will use them. The one establish'd Doctrine of *infallibility* among the *Romanists* is eminent for its propriety that way, while under pretence of *submission* to something they call *Infallible*, 'tis evident that  
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the *faith* of the ignorant Vulgar resolves its self into that which they acknowledge most *fallible*; the Doctrines of their immediate Teachers. But indeed take it at the best, such a *perswasion* is not only an *error* in its self, and an apt *foundation* for innumerable others, but it necessarily renders them incorrigible; the least retractation of a *mistake* being so inconsistent with the claim of *infallibility*, that while they retain the *one*, they must never attempt the *other*, nor can they cease to Erre, till they confess it possible they may do so. How much more than possible that has been, the many Innovations of that Church sufficiently witness; and consequently the danger of presuming upon the unerrableness of a guide. But would all that *upbraid* it there, were themselves *secure* from it, and that many did not in their practice transcribe that *decied doctrine*, and that too with the improvement of worse *circumstances*. I must call them *worse*, by how much the *probabilities* of Erring are *greater* under the extemporary conduct of a *Private person*, than the fixt rules of a *community*, and by how much again the voluntary enslaving my self is more excuseless, than that which the principles of my Profession, and consequently a seeming obligation of Conscience exposes me to. And as to the matter of Fact, I think 'tis evident enough, that the *admiration* of mens Persons is a *spreading disease* that has overrun Christendom, and though a great part of it inveigh against *implicite faith*, yet if it be thoroughly scanned, 'twill appear 'tis rather the *object* than  
the



the *act* we differ about. He that vehemently opposes that homage to the *Conclave*, will yet tamely pay it to a *Classis* : and he that refuses it there, yields it to the Votes of a *Congregational Church* ; or if he hold out against that too, yet chuses to himself some *private Teacher* on which to cast it : Like *Micah*, *Judg. 16. Makes him a Teraphim and a Priest too, for his private use* ; and then confidently consults his *Oracle*, and has nothing to do but believe its *responses*. Nay, that which makes the matter yet more sadly ridiculous, is that the very *Opposition* to *one* *Usurpation* makes them deliver themselves up to *another*. How many when they have heard a *Preacher* rail fiercely at the *Pope*, have presently made him *theirs*, and supposing that *Zeal* an *indication of a safe guide*, have given him as *absolute a rule* of their *Consciences*, as that he exclaim'd against ( perhaps *Envid* ) elsewhere : And the like instances might be given among our other dissenting parties. And this has taught some *Seducers* a lucky artifice, made them observe to what opinions their *Proselytes* had the greatest aversion, and by complying with their *anger* so steal away their *love*, that they might after lead them to what they *pleas'd*, yea, perhaps to that which they so much *detested* : For there want not examples of some, who have by back ways been brought to those *Opinions*, which at first they most defied. What have been the *attempts* or *success* of the *Emissaries* of *Rome* this way, I shall not pronounce, though some ( not improbably ) speak them *great*.

FROM

FROM this blind and passionate esteem of several Teachers have flowed many pernicious consequences, particularly those distinct Appellations, which form differences into Sects, many of which expressly own this original, by bearing the names of their first Authors. I might here put them in mind, that they are illegitimate persons, whom our Law directs to write with an alias, and ask them, whether the Church from their superinduced name, has not cause so to repute them. But I am sure I may with the utmost seriousness say, that this practice is to the great violation of Christian unity, and reproach of Christian profession, which seems to be abandon'd and disown'd by us, who instead of denominating our selves from the Author and finisher of our Faith, find out new Patrons, as if we were asham'd of our first Relation. Alas, how is the title of Christian, which was so glorious to the Primitive owners, that they gladly bought the occasion of boasting it with Torments and Death, become so despicable to us, that every the obscurest name is courted to supplant it. Have any of our Idolized readers bought their Interest in us so dear as Christ has done, why then are we rather ambitious to be accounted their dependants than his? 'Tis the Apostles own argument, 1 Cor. I. 13. when he refutes their factious entitling themselves to Paul and Apollo, &c. by asking them if Paul were crucified for them: And indeed he there says so much upon this point, that I need only refer the Reader thither to learn, either the unreasonableness of this Schismatical zeal  
for

for our several Teachers, or the *inevitable contentions* and *animosities* which spring from it; only let me observe, that every of his Arguments are more pressing upon *us*, than on the *Corinthians*; those taken from the unreasonableness sure are, by how much the *names* we so adore are less venerable than those of *Paul* and *Cephas* or *Apollo*, and those from the consequences are so also. For those Teachers were industrious to *prevent*, whereas ours commonly are no less busie to *promote contentions* on their behalf, and so we are more ascertain'd never to want them.

BUT besides this *kinder* prepossession towards some mens persons, there is another of a different nature, a *sinister* one. I mean *prejudice* and *disgust*, and *this* has done no less harm in Ecclesiastical affairs than the *former*. Men take up *piques* and *displeasures* at others, and then every *opinion* of the disliked person must partake of his *fate*, and be engaged in the *quarrel*: Nor will those that are enemies ever allow one another the honour of being in the right: Nay, some have been so perversely *malicious*, that they have given up their *understandings* to their *spleen*, forsaken an Opinion themselves approved, only that they might find matter of contest with one they maligned. A memorable instance of this *Socrates* gives in his *Eccl. Hist.* in *Theophilus* Bishop of *Alexandria*, who having formerly attested the Orthodox belief, that God was incorporeal; yet upon a sudden indignation against *Dioscorus* and his brethren, who maintain'd the Tenet, he embraced the con-

trary Heresie of the *Anthropomorphites*, that so under the Colour of a difference in *faith*, he might the more advantageously pursue his *malice* ; & the Effects of it were very Tragical, not only to *private persons* in Tumult and Blood-shed, but to the Church by reviving that Error, which was before near expiring, and might as *Socrates* affirms, have lain in the dust, had it not been thus awaken'd. And indeed in Church story scarce any thing occurs more frequently than examples of those, who upon private grudges have either begun or fomented Heresies and Schisms. Thus *Marcion* being denied the Communion of the Roman Church, having before by a *scandalous crime* been cut off from his own, he reveng'd himself by publishing his *detestable doctrine* : In like manner *Miletius* upon a displeasure at *Peter* Bishop of *Alexandria*, first separated from the Church, and after took part with the *Arians* : So also *Lucifer* incensed at *Eusebius* for not approving of his Electing *Paulus* to the See of *Antioch*, broke Communion, and gave both rise and denomination to a new *Seet*. The like is said of *Apollinarius*, that he was excited to the broaching his *Heresie* by his impatience of the Excommunication inflicted on him and his Father, by *Theodotus* Bishop of *Laodicea* ; and several others might be given to the same purpose, out of the Records of those first Ages.

AND certainly the World seems not to have so much improved in *meekness* since, as that we should think the same *principle* is not still as  
*active,*

*active*, and if the Task were not more envious than hard, many recent instances might be given to Parallel the former, especially of such as having justly smarted under the stroke of *Ecclesiastical discipline*, have sought to revenge themselves both on it and the *inflicters*, by *Factions* and *Tumults*; so making the *publick* at once cloak the Infamy, and bear the charge of their *particular rancors*. But this is a Subject neither grateful nor necessary to be more distinctly spoken to. One may however in the general say, that where these private Animosities are any thing *violent*, they usually beat down all Consideration of *publick good*. *Historians* observe of *Themistocles*, that he always thwarted the Councils of *Aristides*, not that he thought it the Interest of the *Commonwealth*, but *his own*, to keep down the growing reputation of his Competitor: And I fear that envious artifice has been too often transcrib'd, as well in *Ecclesiastick*, as in *Civil Transactions*: No *detriment* is thought so formidable to a malicious mind, as the *prosperity* of his Adversary; and publick Ruptures shall still be allowed to widen, till they swallow up the whole, rather than he will close with his Antagonist. The History of the *Scottish Church* gives an apposite Example of this, in a *ruling Presbyter*, who being by King *James* advis'd with about the readmitting *Marquess Huntley*, and prest with the present exigencies of Church and State, which requir'd it, gave his *final answer* in these terms. Well Sir, I see you resolve to take *Huntley* in favour, if you do, I will op-

pose it, chuse whether you will lose him or me, for both you cannot have. Some may think the greatest propriety of this instance lies to shew the insolence of that Tribe towards Majesty ; but however 'tis not impertinent to the matter in hand also ; and shews how light the greatest publick concerns are, when malice is the counterpoize : And indeed the *Naturalists* experiment, that flame will not mingle with flame, never justifies its self better than when applied to minds thus accended, which however they may meet in mutual flashes, can never unite and incorporate : The sadness of it is, that they should only conspire to common vastation, and make the Church its self a burnt-offering.

THUS fatal have our several sorts of prepossessions been to our Religion, for as if that were the common Enemy, our most distant contrary Affections, our love and our hate equally annoy it ; those brutish parts of us our Passions, which like the beasts under the Law, were never to be brought into the Temple, but for sacrifice, are now found there upon a far differing account, not to be slain, but ador'd ; like the *Aegyptian* Isis and *Osyris*, enshrin'd to receive our Devotions, for that the Zeal we pretend elsewhere is really paid to them, is alas too manifest.

## CHAP. XVII.

*A survey of the Causes of Diffutes; Fifthly, Zeal.*

**T**O these several causes of our distractions we may add another, which though in its *original* it may seem more *innocent*, yet is in its *consequents* no less *pernicious*, and that is a *mistaken Zeal*, which as it is *fire* to all about it, so is it *wind* to its self, fans and irritates its own *flames*, and by a confidence that it does *well*, gathers still fresh vigour to do *more*. How great the force of such an Erroneous persuasion is, we may collect from our Saviours premonition to his Disciples, when he tells them, that *those who kill'd them should think they did God service*; and if *Murder*, and that of *Apostles* too, could by the *Magick* of blind Zeal be so transform'd, we must not wonder to find other *Crimes* so too. And what *Christ* thus foretold was after eminently exemplified in *St. Paul*, whom the Holy Writ represents under all the Phrases that may denote a virulent persecutor, as breathing out *threatnings* and *slaughter*, making havock of the Church, and in his own words, *Persecuting that way unto the Death*, and being exceedingly mad against them; and all this he did being Zealous towards God, and out of a *persuasion* that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of *Jesus*, as we find



in his *Apology* to his countrey-men and King *Agrippa*, Act. 22. 2. & 26. 9.

AND of the abettors of those Novel doctrines which after times produced, we have reason to think many were of this Sort, especially in those Heresies which though they carried *secret venom* in them had yet a *plausible appearance* of Sanctity and Devotion; such was that of the *Encratites*, which seem'd to be founded in the veneration of two great Vertues *Continence* and *Temperance*, though by extending them beyond the due limits, they lost that *Sobriety* they too strictly embraced, and became *inordinate* in their Continence, and *excessive* in their Abstinence: Such again were the *Euchitæ* or *Massalians*, who made the whole business not only of *religion* but even of *life* to consist in *praying*; and though by it they evacuated all other ends of both, yet having the *letter* of a Precept, and the *pretence* of Devotion on their side, 'twas a *proper bait* for those who had *much Zeal* and *little Knowledge*. In like manner the *Novatians* Heresie had so glorious an inscription of Purity as was very apt to attract well meaning Souls; who seeing it bid such express *defiance to Apostacy*, could not suspect that it was its self any *defection from the faith*; and accordingly some of that Sect approved their constancy in times both of *Heathen* and *Arian* persecutions. Nor must we be so uncharitable to the modern times, as not to believe many, have acted upon the like Principles, and meant truth and piety, even while they actually promoted

promoted the contrary. But how sincere soever the *purposes* of such seduced Persons were, yet 'tis evident the Church has suffer'd no less by *them*, than by the *more crafty designers*: their *misguided piety* has made as great and incurable Ruptures, as the most *flagitious blasphemies* of others. And when a *rent* is once made, it matters little whether it were done by *error* or *malice*; nay perhaps as to the hopes of repairing, the former may be the more desperate: for whereas *he* that knowingly *commits* an Ill, has the *Upbraidings* of his own Conscience towards his reducing; these on the other side have its *Cherishings* and *Encouragements*, to confirm and animate them. And doubtless they are great advantages which *Satan* has in all ages made of Such Persons, whom he seems to have deluded in the same manner, that *Medea* is said to have done the daughters of *Peleas*, whom she perswaded to hack their *aged Father* in pieces, in hope that by her *Magick*, he should not only recover *life* but *youth*: so these rend and tear their *Mother* the Church out of a hope, no less delusive, of restoring her *pristine beauty* and *vigor*; how far the Event parallels it also, the dying state of *Christianity* does too sadly testify.

NOR has it only been the Heat of *Erring persons* that has been thus mischievous, but sometimes *men of right judgments* have too much contributed to the breach of Unity, and the intemperate and imprudent *Zeal* of these hath serv'd to exasperate the mistaking *earnestness* of the other:

this happens sometimes for want of distinguishing between the *Essentials* and *Circumstantial*s of Religion, and so looking upon a mistake in the *later* with the detestation proper only to the perverting of the *former*; by this means those who have entirely embraced the same *faith*, have yet violated *charity* and broken *communion*: such slight *minute differences* when managed by eager Spirits being easily blown up into solemn and *lasting contentions*; so that the Disputes rais'd about some *pin* or *nail* of the Temple, have sometimes shaken and endanger'd the *whole Fabrick*, robbed the Church of that fraternal unity which was its fastest cement, and surest support. Of this we need no more apt instance from antiquity than that which has been already mentioned upon another occasion, I mean *Victors* unbrother-like Heat towards the Eastern Churches in the *controversie* about *Easter*, which had fomented that Difference into a Schism, which the meeker Piety of his Predecessors thought no ground of *unkindness*, much less of *Separation*, as *Irenaeus* more at large tells him; And probably had men in all the succeeding Ages deliberately *poiz'd* the Errors they oppos'd, and proportion'd their Displeasure but to the *just weight* of them, many of our *disputes* would have been so calm'd, that they should never have become *quarrels*. But many in this particular have only us'd the *Touchstone*, not the *Scales*: and of Opinions that are erroneous, consider not which are more or less pernicious, but with an equal violence fly at all, as

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if the *Stoical* opinion concerning *Sins* had prevail'd in *Errors* also, and that all were resolv'd to be of the same size.

BUT even in those of the highest kind it may perhaps be doubted, whether *too eager an opposition* have not sometimes done hurt, especially in those Doctrines which relate to the *mysterious parts* of Religion, wherein a *novelty* is at first lookt upon with some horror, and many are willing rather to condemn in gross than nicely to examine: Who yet when they find this done for them by *Orthodox persons*, they think they may with such a guide venture to wade into the question, where many times the *insinuations* of Error are so subtle, that all their *Antidotes* secure them not from infection, but they are themselves *captivated* where they expected only to triumph. Neither want there those of the *Vulgar* that are of a more insolent temper; and out of a vanity of making themselves *Umpires* between learned men, greedily read the writings of both Parties, who yet are able to make no *solid judgment* of either; and when 'tis remembred how many *popular artifices* there are to byass such persons, we must confess that *Truth* hath many to one, Odds against her: Besides, *publick arguing* oft serves not only to exasperate the *minds*, but to whet the *Wits* of *Hereticks*, and by shewing them the *weak parts* of their Doctrines, prompts them to rally all their *Sophistry* to fortifie them, that what they want of *truth* and *reason*, may be supplied with *fallacy* and little colours; and Experience shews how fitly that

that kind of *Logick* is accommodated to the greatest part of the World. In short it seems not improbable, that many Heresies owe much of their *growth* to the improper means of *eradicating* them : and have acquir'd a *reputation* from the *stir* that was made about them. Thus *Socrates* tells us that *Alexanders* letters about the *Arian* Heresie serv'd to scatter that pestilent infection the more abroad, and combin'd men into parties, so that the whole world became the *Scene* of that long Tragedy, which possibly might have had a shorter and better *issue*, had not the notice of the Controversie been so early dispers'd.

BUT if the Attempts of the *Pen* have often proved so unfit, it may be consider'd whether those of the *sword* are not more so, and *fighting* be not a worse expedient than *disputing* : and certainly we have great reason to conclude in the affirmative, if we weigh either the Injustice, or Unreasonableness of it. I know there want not those who have thought the propagating Religion by Arms not only *lawful* but *meritorious*, and that in order to the *planting* it in a Nation, the *soil* may be mellowed with the *bloud* of the Inhabitants ; nay the *old* extirpated, and *new* Colonies planted. But we are to remember that as God is the *universal Monarch* of the World, so We have all the relation of *fellow subjects* to him, and can pretend no farther jurisdiction over each other, than what he has delegated to us : and sure 'twould be hard to produce any commission

mission from him for the invading a Nation only because 'tis not of our Faith. 'Tis sure, *those* to whom he first entrusted the promulgating of the Gospel had far *different instructions*, and 'twere fit our *new Evangelists* should shew their *later authority* for this sanguinary Method, in order to which though some have made use of the *Opinion* of some Schoolmen that *dominion is founded in Grace*, yet as that is but an Opinion, so were it admitted as the most certain Truth, it could never warrant any enterprize of this kind, for supposing that a people by wanting *spiritual Blessings* did lose all their right to *temporal*, yet that Forfeiture must devolve only to the Supreme Lord, and when as God in another case asks, where is the *bill of divorce*? Esay 50. 1. so we may demand of these zealous Invaders, where is the *bill of assignment*, by which that right was transferr'd to them? In short, *peace* is the most valuable blessing of humane life, and we cannot without injustice deprive man of it, though we could as we pretend, give them *truth* in lieu of it; for maugre the *Proverb*, that *Exchange will still be robbery*, where the parties are compell'd to make it. But alas, 'tis a vain imagination to think that Religion can be thus impos'd: or that we can bind the *understandings* and *wills* of men, with the same fetters we do their *bodies*; 'tis true indeed the Apostle tells us *there is a way of bringing every thought into Captivity to the obedience of Christ*, but he tells us withall that the *weapons*, by which that Victory is atchieved, are

*not carnal*, 2 Cor. 10. 4. Indeed did Religion consist only in some external *conformities*, external force might bear some proportion to it (which perhaps is the cause that the one is most us'd by those whose religion is most eminent for the other) but 'tis seated in those *faculties* to which outward violence can have no access. Alas, 'tis not whole Armies can besiege my *reason*, nor Canons batter my *will*, 'tis *conviction* not force, that must induce Assent; and sure the *Logick* of a conquering Sword has no great propriety that way; *Silence* indeed it may, but *convince* it cannot: Its efficacy rather lies on the other side, breeds aversion and abhorrence of that Religion, whose first address is in blood and rapine: nor do such attempts gain any thing to the Cause but the *infamy* of those rigors which are us'd to promote it. And sure since this piece of *Mahumetan* Zeal has been transplanted into *Christendom*, it has been much more mischievous than in its native soil. Christianity having been infinitely more oppressed by those that thus fought for it, than those that were in Arms against it. Whether upon this score the *Pope* have not done her more harm than the *Turk*, I leave to consideration.

BUT what is here said of the *military* Sword, I intend not should be applied to the *Civil*; for I treat not here of those legal punishments, which *Magistrates* inflict upon their disobedient Subjects; who indeed may *justly*, nay indeed must *necessarily* require Conformity to *Ecclesiastical* laws,



as well as the *Civil*: the Eruptions in the *one* commonly overflowing the *other* also, and *Schism* usually ending in *Rebellion*; so that 'tis apparently their interest to guard themselves from those riotous effects of pretended zeal, nor is it less their duty, they being as the Ancients express it, *Custodes utriusque tabula* in *S. Paul's* language, *the ministers of God*, Rom. 13. and in *Constantines* dialect *Ἐπίσκοποι πρὸς τὰ ἔξω*, *Bishops in the whole outward administration of the Church*, and if *Herésie* or *Schism* be a *sin*, are by their places obliged to approve themselves *avengers*; to execute wrath no less there, than in other circumstances: And that they are sins and of no small bulk; none can doubt that observes *Herésie* ranked, *Gal. 5.* with *Idolatry*, *witchcraft*, *hatred*, *murders*, and other sins of the flesh; or *Schism*, markt out by the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, as a kind of *petrifying crime*, which induces that induration, to which the fearful expectation of wrath is consequent, for so we find, *Heb. 10. 26.* that *forsaking the assemblies* is lookt on as previous to *Apostacy* and final defection: And therefore sure the Magistrate can do nothing kinder even to the Offenders than by taking their sin early, prevent that fatal growth of it. But that his just power thus rescued I may assume my former assertion, and conclude, that all other Violences are so far from *advancing Christianity*, that they extremely *weaken and disadvantage* it.

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BUT of no sort is this more eminently true than of those *popular heats*, where the People undertakes to chastise *error*: for besides that the outrages then committed are very apt to avert men even from truths which they see so barbarously defended, it often happens that the *multitude* take *causeless alarms*, and think their Faith is invaded when it is not. A memorable instance of this kind *Euagrius* gives in his *Eccl. History*, where he tells us that the Emperor *Anastatius* having added to the *Trisagium* this Clause, *Who was crucified for our Salvation*, the whole City of *Constantinople* was in an uproar, upon an ignorant jealousy that those words had some *Heretical* meaning; in which fury they happening to light upon a poor silly *Monk*, they immediately kill him as the *Inventor* of that clause, and a *conspirer* against the *Trinity*: So unhappily abus'd are the *Transports of wild zeal*, which where it rules, does besides the *direct mischiefs* of Tumult and Sedition create *others* at the rebound, which are more permanent, and discompose and embitter mens spirits, and render them so ambitiously greedy of *quarrels* for their Religion, that they are not only prepar'd to receive but to seek Encounters: and 'tis too sure they can never be wanting to persons of such tempers, since the *adversaries* of Truth cannot have more advantage or Encouragement against it, than this *unpeaceful humor* of those that profess it.

BY these several waies has it come to pass, that even that *zeal* which should be the *life* of Christianity,

Christianity, is become its disease; and *Religion* like a *Hedtick body* is consum'd by its own *Heats*, if at least I may call those its own, which derive not from its proper and native constitution; but are the accidents of its declining state: for how confidently soever men pronounce of themselves, and believe that they are then most *pious*, when they are most *eager* and *unquiet*; yet 'tis sure this is far removed from the true genius and temper of *religion*, which like the *God* it worships, makes its approaches not in *winds* and *Earthquakes*, but in the *still small voice*, 1 Kings 19. 12. and when 'tis consider'd, that the greatest part of the Evangelical Law is made up of *precepts* of Meekness, Long-suffering, and Condescension; we must conclude that *zeal* very *preposterous*, that pretends to obey by *violating* them; or to establish Religion by *undermining* the most essential parts of it: and to Persons under that mistake, we may most properly apply the *reproof* given by Christ to his Disciples upon the same occasion, *you know not, what manner of Spirit you are of.*

IT will therefore become men to look with *Jealousie* on themselves in this particular; not too confidently to *pursue* every Incitation which carries a shew of Piety; but soberly to *weigh* how it agrees with the Rules and Oeconomy of that Gospel for which it pretends so much concern; for though the *true Christian Zeal* can never be too much cherished; yet alas 'tis not *every warmth* we feel about Religion that can  
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own *that Title*; and sure we do not more often, or more fatally mistake any thing than in applying that venerable *name* to things of a far *inferior*, nay sometimes of a *contrary* nature. How often upon this Error, have men ascrib'd that to their *piety* which they owed to their *complexions*, and thought 'twas their *religion* made them Earnest, when 'twas meerly their *constitution*: Nay, how often has *Satan* taken this advantage of transforming himself into an *Angel of light*, and insinuating his illusions under this disguise. And truly they must still be liable to both these deceits, so long as they place the *essence* of Christian zeal in *heat* and *eagerness*. 'Tis true indeed it has its heats, but actuated in a far different way; it has flames of *Love*, not of *Anger*; to melt, not consume our Enemies; and makes us apter to pour out our *own bloud* a Sacrifice to Truth than *that of gain-sayers*. In short, if it be a Fire, 'tis that *pure Elemental* which the *Peripateticks* talk of, which is but of a moderate heat; apt to *cherish*, not *devour*.

AND would God men would so far believe this, as to think there may be *moderation*; without the danger of *Laodicean luke-warmness*, and upon that supposition suffer themselves to cool into a treatable Temper, and then I should humbly offer to them these few Considerations.

FIRST the great and universal *fallibility* of humane Nature, which renders it not only possible that we *may*, but certain that every one of

us *shall* erre in something or other ; and this sure is very proper to perswade lenity to those whom we find actually erring. 'Tis the *Apostles* argument in the case of Sin, *Gal. 6. 1.* *Brethren if a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted.* Where the common Peccability of mankind is urged to induce Commiseration and Gentleness towards the Offenders ; and if this be of force in *sin*, where the concurrence of the will renders the person more inexcusable, it will surely hold much more in *bare Error*, which being purely involuntary, (for nothing is properly Error farther than it is so) 'tis to be lookt on rather as the *disease* than *crime* of the Person : and since we use not to exclaim against men for being *sick*, but compassionately to endeavour their *recovery*, why should we here use so much a *contrary method*. 'Tis true indeed, 'tis necessary sometimes in order to the *Cure*, and sometimes for preventing the *infection* of others, to do some things *uneasie* to the Patient ; and what tends regularly to either of these Ends, may in this case also be Charitably done, by those that have Authority : but *that* differs as far from our usual *severities*, as the *lancings* of a Physician do from the *wounds* of an Adversary ; or *publick* Discipline from *private* Spleen. So that notwithstanding this, we may resume our *conclusion* and infer from the *Errableness* of our Nature, the *reasonableness* of *compassion* to the seduced. And as it thus prompts us to look *gently*

upon others, so also to reflect *impartially* upon our selves; and consider how possible it is, that even whilst we condemn others, we may indeed be in the wrong; and then all the Invectives we make at their *supposed* Errors; fall back with a rebounded force upon our own *real* ones. If this possibility were but adverted to, it would make us less positive and Dogmatical in our opinions, and so consequently take away one main ground of contention; for though we often quarrel about *matters*, which are indeed but *conjectural*, yet not till we esteem them *otherwise*; and when we consider how many men have vehemently believed *apparent falsehoods*, it may well allay our *confidences* in all those cases, where we have not some *firmer ground* than our *own* (or indeed any humane) *judgment* to build it on.

AS for those who have the *surest grounds* of Perswasion, and by their security of being themselves in the Truth, have the more *reason* to be earnest in propagating it to others: let them in the second place consider how necessary 'tis to chuse *appropriate means* to that good end, without which they do but undermine *themselves*, and defeat their own *aims*. Indeed Prudence is not only a *Moral*, but *Christian* Vertue; and such as is necessary to the constituting of all others: without it Devotion degenerates into Superstition, Liberality into Profuseness, and this of Zeal becomes only a Pious kind of Phrensie. And of Persons so possess'd, God may say as *Achish* did of *David*, 1 Sam. 21. 15. *have I need of mad men?*



no sure, the *defence of Truth* is too noble a cause to be so managed; its *Champions* are not like men in a fray to make every thing a weapon that they can first snatch up, and lay on as chance or fury guides, but are deliberately to consult the properest expedients, use not only force but *Stratagem* against the Enemy, and yet withall to take care that while they *oppose* one, another gain not *advantage*: For alas, 'tis indifferent to our grand *Adversary*, by which of his temptations we fall, and if by subverting the *faith* of some, he shipwrack the *charity* of others, he has his *End*, and triumphs at once both over the *speculative* and *practick* part of our Religion.

AND this may induce a farther consideration, and prompt us to examine what degree of guilt lies on those who either out of a blind, or rash zeal have given him this advantage. And here though I cannot doubt, but God makes *great allowances* to the Miscarriages of *sincere intentions*, yet perhaps we have carv'd more liberally to our selves than he designs us, and presume our Security greater than in truth it is. For how innocent soever a good purpose may make our *Error*, yet 'tis a privilege beyond all possibility of grant, that our *sins* should be so also; therefore if our Misperfwasions beget wicked practice, we may be accountable for the *one*, though not for the *other*. We find indeed *S. Paul* alledges his *ignorance*, as the Cause of his finding *mercy*, for his persecuting the Church, but we are to remember what that *mercy* he there refers to is; not that of *absolution*, but *conversion*; and had



he resisted the *later*, though with never so full a persuasion of his doing well in it, I much doubt whether his good meaning would have secur'd him the *former*; so that all the *Encouragement*, that Example can afford is, that God may probably do more for the reducing an *Erring* than a *malicious* Persecutor: And when 'tis considered that all the odds that Christ makes between him that does ill *knowingly* and *ignorantly*, is in the *number* of Stripes: we must resolve our *mistakes* are no such *Amulets* as totally to secure us. And then whether our *guilts* shall not swell in proportion to the *ills* we do, is a question that sure can never be resolved in the negative: for if a *good intention* cannot alter the *nature* of Sin, sure it can as little change their *degree*, or make that of two Persons equally mistaken, the *Murder* of the one, shall not be a greater Crime than an *intemperate speech* of the other. And upon this measure the accounts of erring zeal are like to rise very high with many; unless we can think Rebellion and Bloudshed, Sacrilege and Schism, with all that train of zealous Enormities to be light and trivial.

NOR will it at all legitimate *these*, or any other, Crimes, though they should happen to be committed in the *defence of Truth*: Of this St. Peter is a ready instance, who when to guard Him, who was Truth its self, he had *violated* the Authority of the Magistrate in *wounding* an Officer: Christ reprehends his rashness, and instead of applauding

plauding his *zeal*, upbraids his *absurdity*, that could think his *mean aids* considerable to him, who could command *Legions of Angels* to his rescue. And sure he is not so much more impotent in his *glory*, than he was in his *exinanition*, as now to need our *Sins* to secure any of his *concerns*; and if St. Peter were thus check'd for using that Sword which he was a little before warn'd to buy, it must sure set an ill Character upon those *tumultuous reformatiions* which have so much employed the *zeal* of later ages, to which there can never want a concurrence of several great *sins*; the *guilt* whereof will scarce be wiped off, by their design'd *subserviency* to Truth; what Degree of *extenuation* it may afford is hard to pronounce, since we have no *rule* to measure it by. But whatsoever it is, we are to remember, that it can belong only to such a Zeal as is *purely religious*, that mixes not with our *Passions* or *Interests*; and therefore before men be too forward to *appropriate* any Indulgence of that kind, 'twill be necessary to *Examine*, whether no sinister Adherent have vitiated that *integrity* of their purpose to which alone it can (even by their own award and sentence) appertain.

I HAVE insisted the more on *this*, because many are apt to ascribe too unlimitedly to the Force of a *good meaning*, to think that is able to bear the stress of whatsoever Commissions they shall lay on it; and by thus presuming on their *Antidote*, venture boldly on the *deadliest poisons*. To such the foregoing considerations may be use-

ful ; and by robbing them of that *imaginary* Security, help them to a *real* one, by making their good *purposes* the Director of good *actions*, not the Apology for bad. This would make Religion look consonant to its self, which now groans under the reproach of all those Ills, that are acted under *its* Patronage ; and sure to rescue her from such a *scandal*, is but a very moderate piece of *compassion* : Yet would God she might obtain it even from *those* who profess themselves her greatest *Votaries* : But alas, 'tis one sad circumstance of her ruine, that she owes it to such ; that those Weapons which should *defend* her, thus *recoil* into her Bowels, and *zeal* should do her more mischief than *prophaneness* ; for while she is but scolded at by *that*, she is wounded by *this* : nor are those *wounds* ever like to close, till our Zeal grow more *balsamick*, partake of those *healing qualities* of Love and Meekness, the Want whereof has rendred it so unhappily instrumental to our Distractions.

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## CHAP. XVIII.

*A survey of the Causes of Disputes; Sixthly, Idleness.*

**B**UT as *this over-active* humour has done abundant Mischief to the Church, so is it observable, that the *direct contrary* has done as much, nay, which is yet stranger, the one is frequently the product of the other, and our too *busie zeal*, springs from our too great *Idleness*. How much soever this may sound like *Paradox*, yet both *reason* and *experience* attest the Truth of it; for we are to consider that God has put an *active principle* into man, which 'tis impossible so to suppress, as that there shall be a total cessation from *motion*: And therefore every intermitting of sober, regular actings, makes way for wild Extravagant ones; for as nature is said so vehemently to abhor vacuity, that the very inanimate bodies would forsake their specifick motions to prevent it. So when the *mind* is Empty, when it has no worthy and profitable *speculation* to Entertain it, every the most improper and preternatural *Object* offers its self, and importunately crouds in to fill the *vacuum*. This seems to have been well understood, though ill applied by *Pharaoh*, when he thought the *Israelites* proposal of Travelling into the Wilderness to their Devotions, was the Effect of their too

sure at home ; and therefore encreases their *tasks* as the properest way of diverting their *design*: And in like manner we find those that treat of *Politicks*, insist upon the necessity of keeping the *People busie*, in order to which it is, that they mention the use of *Mathematicks* and other contemplative Sciences, to entertain the *active spirits* of a Nation, in demonstrating of *Problemes*, solving *Phanomenas*, and drawing *Schemes* and *Diagrams*, who else would be practising upon the *Government*, making new *Ideas* and Platforms for the *Common-wealth* : And doubtless there is parity of reason in the Ecclesiastick State, which would have been at *more peace*, had some men found themselves *other diversions*.

AND this is confirm'd to us by experiment and observation of Event, for if we look into the Primitive times, we shall find that when there was a necessity of defending the *common faith* against *Heathenism*, when Christians were employed in writing *apologies* and *vindications*, there were much fewer of these *intestine debates* ( at least such as were *Metaphysical* and purely National ) they had their hands full of the *foreign Enemy*, and had the less temptation to jangle among *themselves*. So also when they were under the greatest storms of persecution, when the Church was most violently assaulted from *without*, it had the greatest Calm *within*. They were then incessantly employed, and busied their Thoughts in preparing for the fiery trial. Those cloudy days made them keep close at home waiting for the  
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Bridegrooms coming, and suffer'd them not to wander abroad for those unprofitable Curiosities, which though like *Oil* they might nourish *flame*, yet would never furnish their *Lamps*, or gain them admission to the wedding but in the intervals, and especially after the total cessation of their calamity, when their Peace had taken them off their *Vigilance*, than while they slept, the Envious man had advantage to sow his *Tares*. Rest made them *idle*, Idleness made them *curious*, and Curiosity *contentious*; and those who under the Tyranny of a *Nero* or *Domitian* were in perfect harmony under the gentle pious regiment of a *Constantine*, grew to the greatest discord, and perhaps (besides the Divine and extraordinary supports the Church had in her greatest *conflicts*) this may be one of the best natural *accounts*, how she came to flourish most under her heaviest *pressures*.

BUT our observation ends not here, for besides this extraordinary importunity of thoughts, which persecuting times occasion'd, Christianity is in its frame and constitution an *active State*, has its standing business, and besides all *accidental*, a Series of *determinate, constant employments*, sufficient to entertain mens minds: from which we may infer, that when this is thoroughly adverted to, there will be few *chasms* of Time to be filled with *foreign impertinences*. And this gives a clear account how our *divisions* have come to grow upon us, namely, by the Neglect of *prædict duties*, for as every age degenerated more  
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from *Primitive piety*, so they advanced farther in *nice enquiries* and *new opinions*; and as the zeal of *practice* grew cool, so that of *dispute* gathered heat and vigour. So that if we consider how far our *good works* fall short of the first Christians, we need not wonder to see our *controversies* so far exceed them; that Time which was gain'd from the *one*, being employed in hammering and forging the *other*. I do not forget that I have before ranked this *diversion* of Christian Practice among the *effects* of our Contentions, and foresee it may be thought very inartificial here, to make it the *cause* also: But alas, its concern in them is so extravagantly great, as to have at once the relation of Child and Parent, to be both Root and Branch, Fountain and Stream, and like a *circle* unites in its *self* Beginning and End: For as it first gave birth to our quarrels, so it finally receives *encrease* from them. In short, our *oscitant lazy piety* gave vacancy for them, and they will now lend none back again, for more *active duty*. And as this *neglect* of our general calling of Christianity has been thus pernicious, so have the *ill effects* thereof been improved by the like ill attendance on our particular ones. We find *St. Paul* takes notice, that the *younger widows*, who deserted their own *Ecclesiastical Office*, grew *busie-bodies* in the Secular affairs of others; and sure we may with truth invert the note, and observe that *those*, who either desert or neglect their *Secular Callings*, are the most perniciously *medling* in Ecclesiastick matters. Did men conscientiously employ



ploy themselves in their *honest occupations*, their Minds would be sufficiently *diverted*, and it would not become the work of Artificers to make new Schemes of Doctrines or discipline; Divinity would not then pass the *Tard* and *Loom*, the *Forge* and *Anvil*, nor Preaching be taken in as an easier supplementary *Trade*, by those that disliked the *pains* of their own. But all this alas we have seen to the equal shame and detriment of Piety. *Mechanicks* of all sorts have presum'd to *teach* what themselves never *learnt*; and those that serv'd long *Apprentiships* to other Crafts, have become *Divines* in a moment, and with the same æmulous industry wherewith they us'd to invent new *fashions*, have made new *Religions*. And as Idleness has thus made some *Preachers*, so it has made more *hearers*, those who either by the *easiness* of their Callings, or their slight managery of them, have had the most *vacant time*, have been the aptest to run after *new teachers*: Hence it is that *Towns* and *Cities* have been the great *nurseries of faction*, the *leisure* of Shop-men making them more *inquisitive* after, and *receptive* of Novelties. And were that *over-grown zeal* of Sermons, which has now devour'd all other parts of Religion, among that sort of men thoroughly scanned, we should find Idleness goes very far in its *composition*, for besides that Hearing is the most *lazy* of all religious Offices, as appears by the *undisturb'd sleeps* men can take at Sermons; it is manifest this insatiate appetite of it, is originally founded either in the *not having* business,

or

or not *attending* to it. For should I ask such men, whether if necessity had enforc'd *St. Pauls* rule upon them, that without their *labour* they should not *eat*, they would have spent their whole week at *Lectures*, and trusted to be fed by the *Ear*. I believe few could pretend to have begun with so exorbitant a zeal, though the truth is in the issue it sometimes arrives to it; and men that have *itching Ears* forget the rest of the *body*, whilest to gratifie *them*, they totally neglect all care of their *Secular concerns*, and bring Themselves and Families to want and beggary.

NOR is it only this *one rank* of Persons whom Idleness has betrayed to faction, *Servants* we have frequently seen under the same Seducement, while either having but *little work*, or but *little diligence* in it, they have found time to listen after *novel doctrines*, with which being once tainted, they impatiently thirst after more, and neglecting the *duties* of their place, spend their *time*, which by compact is their Masters (and can with no more justice be purloin'd from him than his goods) in following *factious Teachers*, who instruct them so in their *Christian liberty*, that they bring them to despise all *subjection*: And by telling them they are to call no man Master upon *Earth*, that they are to own no King nor Priest but *Christ*; teach them to contemn all Authority, *Domestick, Civil or Ecclesiastick*.

IF we look farther into *families*, we shall find also that many of our She-zealots become so upon the very same ground, when *Women* neglect  
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that which St. *Paul* assigns them as their proper Business, *the guiding of the house*, their Zeal is at once the *product* and *excuse* of their Idleness; and in spite of the *ill Character* the Wise-man has set on her, *whose feet abide not in her house*, *Prov. 7. 11.* it becomes the *mark* of a Saint, when a Lecture or Conventicle is taken in the way: And though these feminine Irregularities may seem to be of no great concern to the publick, yet experience convinces the contrary; it having been the *unhappy privilege* of that Sex (as ancient as their Mother *Eve*) to be able to do great and important *mischiefs*; and doubtless many *men* may give the same account of their Schism and Sedition, that *Adam* did of his first sin, *The woman that thou gavest me, &c.* This has always been well understood by *Seducers*, who have found it the most compendious way to their designs, *to lead captive silly women*, and make them the *Duck-coys* to their whole Family: But even those who have mist of this influence over the *minds* of their Husbands, have yet had it over their *Purses*, and out of them supported the *Rabbies* of the Faction; who in gratitude to those wise *Abigails* give their Husbands the *title*, and perhaps wish them the fate of *Nabal*. And God knows, how many men have thus been made contributors to the *cause* they have most detested, maintain'd that *fire* which those *incendiaries* have kindled in the Holy place; *Money* being no less the *sinews* of Ecclesiastical than Secular *War*.

THUS we see how the *Idleness* even of the  
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most inconsiderable persons has at the rebound been extremely *pernicious* to the Church, which like a *Clock* or *Watch* may be disorder'd by the *rust* of the least *Pin*; how much more then, by that of the *main wheels* and *springs*; if Negligence in *lay-callings* have though but an oblique, yet so inauspicious an Influence, the like Neglect in *Ecclesiastick* must needs have a worse, because more immediate and direct. And would to God we could say this had been wanting to the completing the mischief: But alas, many of those who are called to labour in the *Lords Vineyard*, seem to have forgot their Errand, and stand there all the day *Idle* (a much worse sight than to have seen them so only in the *Market-place*;) so that I fear there is too evident ground of saying, that the *slight execution* of the Pastoral Office, has been *one* of the most eminent Contributors to our distractions. And among *all the parts* of that Charge, none has been more generally, or more perniciously neglected than that of *Catechizing*; the want whereof has left People so unbottom'd, that like a *house* built on the *sand*, every *Wind* of Doctrine blows down that Faith which they only profess, but understood not. This is that which has made so many *unstable Souls*, as *St. Peter* observes, *2 Pet. 2. 14.* to be the proper prey of Deceivers. And God knows, we may from sad experiment confirm the note. I wish the same *negligence* do not again evidence its self by the same *effects*: But besides this, which is part of the *Publick Ministry*, (and deservedly is so, being  
useful

useful to the whole Church, the aged as well as children ) there are *private* Intercourses between Pastor and People which are of *great use*, would God they were of *equal practice*: We know a *careful* Shepherd does not only turn his *flock* into a *common Pasture*, and then think he has done his work, but does with a particular advertence observe the *thriving* of every one of them, takes notice of their single *strayings* and *diseases*, and accordingly applies himself to reduce or cure them, and surely the like care is full as necessary in the *spiritual* Shepherd, 'tis not the *counsel* which is promiscuously dispensed in a Sermon ( and whereof 'tis odds every man takes that which is least proper for him ) that will do the *business*: Converts come not in now as in *St. Peters* days, in throngs and shoals, a more distinct and particular application is now necessary; men must be treated with apart, their particular *wants* discern'd, and *applications* accordingly made of *instructions*, *reproof* or *comfort*, and 'tis these appropriate *Medicines*, that are like to make *sound flocks*. Had Ministers generally bestowed more *pains* this way, they might probably have frustrated the *attempts* of Seducers, who could not so easily have insinuated themselves into the people, had they found them thus prepossess'd: but while these with all the arts of a *subtile industry* infuse their *poysons* into every one they meet, nothing but the like *diligence* in administering *Antidotes*, is like to countertermine them. How much of that has been us'd I shall leave to the Consciences of  
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concern'd persons to determine. But besides the *ill influence* the Pastors negligence has on the *People*, it has in respect of themselves an immediate propriety to the advancing our debates, the *leisure* which is thus acquir'd, being apt to betray *speculative persons*, to the study of those *curious questions*, which are the great *disturbers* of our Peace; and of those that study them so few keep themselves in neutrality, that parties are still fomented by it: whereas were the *practical business* of their Charge thoroughly attended, the *remainder of time* would not be more than the study of the more solid, useful parts of Divinity would exact, and consequently there would no *surplus* be left for those *dangerous impertinencies*, which as the Apostle says, *serve to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers*, 2 Tim. 2. 14. But when our Watchmen sleep, 'tis no marvail if they dream too, and entertain themselves and others with those *Phantastick notions*, which the great day will manifest to have had nothing of *weight and reality*, besides the Mischiefs they wrought.

AND indeed if we scan the *volumes* of those vain Speculations, we shall have cause to conclude that Idleness has *created* as well as *fomented* them; and they had as well wanted Authors as abettors, had men found themselves more useful business: and that not only the extemporary *Chimæra's of Phanaticks*, but the more elaborate *nicities of the Schools*, have been thus derived: we know *Air* possesses no place, where it first finds not a *vacuity*, nor could those lighter notions,



tions, have filled mens brains, had they found them prepossess'd with what was more *solid*: but when men wanted more *substantial work* for their Understandings, they were fain to employ them thus in making *Cob-webs*, of which they have made a worse sort of *Jewish veil* in the Sanctuary, and have now involved the *Gospel* in greater Obscurities, than the *Law*, was before: whence our *Bezaleels* and *Aholiab*s have been inspir'd for this work I shall not determine; but sure not from him whose Character S. *John* gives us (in peculiar reference to gospel revelation) that *he is light, and in him is no darkness at all,*  
1 Jo. 1.5.

THUS we see even *Idleness* wants not its operation; but is productive of great and mischievous effects; it being the unhappy property of that Vice, that it *supplants* its Self, and by a fatal *Antiperistasis* makes men perniciously *active*: so that we may truly say *sloth* has made more *Business* than *industry*. I am sure in this instance it has cut out work for many ages, though of such a kind, that we have little reason to wish that our *Lord* at his coming should find us *so doing*: yet for ought now appears, our *activity* is so wholly bent that way, that 'tis like to be the *only*, at least the most *intense business* we shall be found at.

I MIGHT here take a very apt occasion to declaim against *Idleness*, as the unhappy fountain of so great mischiefs, but that is a *vice* that has been so often *arraign'd*, that I need not re-



peat those *charges* which all Authors, Natural, Moral and Divine have laid against it. Let but this of its being the Original of *faction* be added, and there can be nothing wanting to render it a most *dangerous crime*: yea, and a most *monstrous* one too, that operates thus preternaturally, that *freezes* and yet *inflames* men at once, *stupifies* and *enrages*: And yet alas, there is as much riddle in its *fate* as its *nature*; 'tis *hated*, and yet *embraced*; generally *decied*, and yet as generally *cherished*: and though it have no *advocates*, has many *friends*. Would God men would at last be ashamed to *be* what they are ashamed to *own*, and by a diligent attendance on their proper business, secure themselves first from doing *nothing*, and then from doing *ill*; the one being so close an Attendant on the other, that 'tis scarce possible to sever them. And God knows the Church finds too sad proof of their connection. *Idleness* having serv'd as *Ashes* to keep alive that *fire* which has set her in *combustion*. Thus unhappily *passive* is she in our disorders, and *accessary* to all our Guilts and Punishments: All our peccant *humors* concur to her *disease*, and like a common *mark* she receives *arrows* from all Quarters, we have seen how many *Contributers* there are to her *ruine*, every one whereof with a wanton cruelty (like *Cæsar's* murderers) are ambitious to inflict *new wounds*, and to give her *Supernumerary deaths*; and whilst she is thus surrounded with *Affassines*, what can we expect but that her present *languishings*

*guishings* should End in *death*. That Christi-  
an Religion now crumbled into so many  
*minute fractions*, should like *dust* be scatter'd,  
and irrecoverably dissipated, and thus infallibly  
it must be, if either *God* do not miraculously  
countermine us, and do more *for* us than we can  
do *against* our selves, or we recover so much so-  
briety, as to forbear to *Massacre* what we pre-  
tend to *Love*, and endeavour to bind up those  
*wounds* at which our own Souls are like to  
*Expire*.

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## CHAP. XIX.

*The Conclusion drawn from all the Premises.*

WE have hitherto examin'd the ef-  
*fects* and *originals* of our conten-  
tions, and now the only re-  
maining Enquiry is concerning the *ways* of re-  
dress. And that will exact no long disquisition:  
for as in *diseases* 'tis said, the knowing the *cause*  
is one half of the *cure*; so more especially is it  
here, where the *remedies* are merely *priva-*  
*tive*, and we are not to be healed by *exter-*  
*nal applications*, but only by *subtracting* those Hu-  
mors which feed the Malady: There will there-  
fore need no other *prescription* than to advise

the *exterminating* of all those Passions and Interests which have appear'd necessary to our quarrels, which though they are become the publick *Epidemick disease*, yet as the *infection* did, so must the cure arise from single persons: for as we look not a *common Pestilence* should cease without due care and manage both of the *sick* and *sound*: so neither can this *Church plague* ever abate, but by the cure, or fortifying its *individual members*.

LET every man therefore who has any way made himself a Party to these contests, seriously interrogate his own heart; what it is that has engag'd Him in them: if any of the *sinister motives* before rehearst, let him for a while shift the *Scene*, and instead of *accusing others* as Opposites to Truth, *condemn himself* as Enemy to Peace: remembring that how just or important soever the *cause* be, it is no so to *him*; whilst he serves his humors and designs under its covert. The *Philosophers* in their darker notions of *Truth* could yet discern, that she was not accessible to *any* who sought her not purely for *her self*, with sincere and single Intentions, and if she entertain no *Pupils* that are not so qualified, is it fit she should have *Guardians* and *Champions* of a quite distant Temper? No, he that undertakes the defence of *Speculative Verity*, must first possess himself of that *practick Truth* the Psalmist speaks of, *Pf. 51*. That *in the inward parts*, such a simplicity and integrity of Purpose, as may supplant all those indirect Aims, purge out every prejudice and passion,

sion, which may byass, and pervert him; and by that time he has done *this*, 'tis odds but he will find a *new face of affairs*, and discern that many of those things he so fiercely contended about, were either false or trivial; acquir'd their *considerableness* only from those *magnifying perspectives* of his own Lusts, through which he viewed them. However till he have thus denudated himself of all these *encumbrances*, he is utterly unqualified for these *Agones*; and how lawfully soever others may strive, 'tis sure he cannot, that does it upon so unlawful grounds, and therefore upon *pain* of losing much more than a *corruptible crown* must *withdraw himself*. As for those who can yet *acquit* themselves from having fomented our Distractions, I shall not forbid them to look with great complacency upon it, but rather by considering how valuable a *piece of Innocency* it is, engage and encourage themselves to *preserve* it; and to that purpose, jealously to examine the *first overtures* of a Temptation. When they find any *proneness* to immerse in Faction, any unwonted *heat* towards a Dissenter, to trace it to its *fountain* and *original*; nicely to observe whether it issue not from some of those *envenom'd springs* forementioned, and make as much hast to stop its *current*, as they would to impede the most *overwhelming inundation*; for such 'twill infallibly prove to those who indulge to its course. But as a *Turf* will at first close the *breach*, which neglected becomes the *inlet* of a mighty *Torrent*: so had this *early vigilance* been us'd, it might

with ease have prevented those Distempers, in private Beasts, from whence the general Confusion has sprung. As it is, might but these two things be obtain'd, would but the Guilty purge, and the Innocent guard themselves, we might yet hope to see an end of our Discords: not that I suppose it possible to extinguish all diversity of Opinions among men, who from their differing faculties, and other guiltless occurrents, may and will have their judgments severally dispos'd. But first, were all, who have upon the former culpable motives enter'd the lists, excluded, we should find They would amount to such a Number, that there would be few left to maintain the Combat. Nay, secondly, were it not for those conceal'd inducements, there would scarce be any Combat to maintain, those are the things that convey the sting and malignity into our Differences, without those we might dissent, but not fall out; and should no more be angry to see another opine contrary to us, than we are to see him of a differing stature, or complexion. In fine, let us pretend what we will, 'tis the Carnality within, that raises all the Combustions without: This is the great wheel to which the Clock owes its motion, while the pretext of Truth and Piety is but like the hand, set indeed more conspicuously, but directed wholly by the secret movings of the other. This, this alone is it which creates and continues our broils, and by a monstrous conjunction of Properties, is its self both flame and fuel: Nor can we doubt that from hence spring those railing accusations,

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we bring one against another, if we remember what *St. Jude* tells us that the *Angel* brought them not even against the *Devil* himself, he could calmly manage a *dispute* with the most execrable and provoking *adversary*, because his *Angelick* nature had none of that *carnal leaven* which ferments to the *souring* of ours, an evident Indication what it is that has rendred our arguings so invective, that *divinity* seems now an Artifice to elude *law* by daily patronizing those *Libels*, which would else be Obnoxious to *civil Justice*.

BUT I presume there need no more be said to evince this, which has, I fear, the attestation of too many consciences, to be generally doubted; the *greater difficulty* will be, to perswade the depositing of those *lusts*, which though they are confessedly the *Boutefieus* among us, have yet by I know not what Fascination so *endear'd* Themselves, that we tenaciously *retain* them in spite of all their appendent Mischiefs; nay, we *cherish* and *foster* them, and for that very purpose bring them under the *covert* of Religion. He that has but a *puny vice*, if he get it like *Joash* conceal'd and shelter'd in the *Sanctuary*, 'twill not only *live*, but *reign* too. Put on a Port and Majesty, and appear venerable upon the pretence of that Piety, whose Essence and Being it evacuates and undermines.

INDEED sin never arrives at so luxuriant a *growth*, as when it roots in *hallowed ground*, which *Satan* so well knows, that he has ever been industrious to *plant* it in that *soil*. Thus we find he

had introduced the most *brutish crimes* into the religion of the *Gentiles*, interwoven them into their *Sacred Rites* and *Mysteries*, till virtue and vice had changed names, and it became *piety* to be Wicked, and *profaneness* to be Innocent. And when that gross deceit became detected by *Gospel light*, when he could not in the same manner obtrude upon *Christians*, he yet found the way to do it more obliquely, and by starting these religious *quarrels*, gave at once employment and reputation to the most irreligious *vices*. For alas, what part of wild *fury* was there in the Heathen *Bacchanals*, which we have not seen Equall'd if not Exceeded by some *intoxicated zealots*? Or what *cruelty* in their most barbarous *rites*, which has not been matcht by the *inhumanity* of dissenting Christians? So that upon a just scanning, all our splendid *pretence* of Sanctity is but an *emulation* of Gentile Impurity under a better name; and while we damn Heathens for their *Moral virtues*, We are yet so stupid as to hope our selves to be saved by their *worst vices*.

AND now who that does enough *consider* can think he can enough *bemoil* this sad state of affairs: That Christianity should thus out-run its self; and bring us round to *Gentilism* again, whilst her Professors ridiculously contend for the *title* of the best Christians, by *such acts* as denominate them none at all. Thus have we inverted the *significancy* of that *Sacred Name*, and made it serve only to upbraid the *contrariety* of our *practice*; so that that which was once the *Index* to point



point out all *Moral* and *Divine* virtues, does now on the contrary mark out *that* part of the World, where *least* of them reside. This, this alone is the prize we have acquir'd with so much sweat and blood, this the *Triumph* we have brought to our Religion, which indeed could never have sunk to such a *despicableness* by any Endeavours but our own; for so long as Christianity waged war only with *foreign* enemies she never mist to be *victorious*, but since that these *intestine* discords have turn'd her force against *her self*, *Bella geri placuit nullos habitura triumphos*, there is no possibility of success, the meer fight implies a defeat, and the swords of all Parties meet in her bowels. 'Twas a passionate *expostulation* that *Julia* is said to have us'd with her two sons *Antonine* and *Geta*, whose animosities having prompted them to divide the Empire, which they were joyntly to have enjoyed, she askt them whether they would divide their Mother also; implying how much their discords had rackt and torn her. And sure our common Mother may make a yet sadder complaint of her Sons, by whose unkind dissentions she is so miserably mangled, that she may cry out with the *Psalmist*, *My soul is among Lions, and I lye among the Children of men that are set on fire.*

AND now if amidst all our importunate pretences to Piety, there be indeed any such thing among us, methinks it should give us some relentings, make us sadly consider to what a deplorable condition we have brought that very religion on which we profess to hang all our hopes; and would

would God those who are the most nearly concerned in this Contemplation would pursue it to the utmost; let them on the one hand set the most *glittering temptations* to Discord, and on the other let them view the *dismal effects* of it, and then consider at how *dear a rate* they gratifie a few *impotent Passions*. Can any man without Horrour think that his *thirst* of Glory has brought *dishonour* to his Religion, and consequently to his God; that his *curious enquiries* into things secret, has help't to Evacuate the more *useful things* Revealed; or in short, that his *pursuit* of his various *interests* and *appetites* has destroyed what was so incomparably more valuable, the *honour* of the Gospel, the *unity* of the Church, and as many *souls* as have perisht by that scandal. 'Twas as infamous a Character of *inhumanity* as the very *Poets* could feign of *Diomedes*, that he fed his horses with mans flesh; but alas, that barbarity is here infinitely out-done, when Men nourish far worse *bruits*, their own unreasonable *lusts*, with those things that are most *sacred*. Certainly were the vastness of this *guilt* thoroughly weighed, 'twould make men sick of those petty wretched *acquests* they have thus purchased, make them fling back this *price of blood*, I say not with the same *despair*, but with as great *remorse* and *detestation* as *Judas* did the *silver pieces* for which he sold his Master. 'Tis sure the crimes have too great an affinity, as in all other circumstances, so especially in this, that as the one *was*, so the other *is* most frequently the Guilt of an *Apostle*, I mean of those to whom

whom Christ has committed the dispensing of that Gospel which they thus evacuate, and doubtless this is a consideration of great enhancement, as that which superadds *treachery* to all the other pestilent *ingredients* of the Crime; 'tis the *falsifying* the most important *trust*, for under words of that signification we find the *office* of the Ministry every where represented in Scripture, as *Stewards*, *Ambassadors*, *Shepherds*, and consequently the accounts of the sin must swell so much the higher. For a Steward to *embezzle* those Goods he undertakes to *manage*; an Ambassador to *betray* his Prince for whom he should *negotiate*; a Shepherd to *worry* that Flock which he is set to *guard*, these are crimes that double their malignity from the quality of the Actors; and yet this is undeniably the Guilt of all *those* whose *profession* having devoted them to the *Church*, have impiously chang'd the *Scene*, and devoted the Church to *them*, serv'd all their mean degenerate ends upon her; and as *Chyrurgeons* are said sometimes to deal with profitable Patients, kept open, nay, widened her *wounds* for their own *advantages*.

IT has been the *Priests Litany* as ancient as *Joels* time, *Spare thy people O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach*; but now alas, who shall prevail with them to do that themselves which they beg of God, to spare his people and his heritage; to prostitute them no more to their own sinister designs, nor by their vain and endless *contentions*, expose them as well to *ruine* as *contempt*. He were indeed a happy Orator that could in this  
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effectually intercede with them, though One would think the *wonder* should lye on the other side, and the only strange thing be, that they should either *need* or *resist* such a solicitation, it being so much the concern of all that ought, as well upon the score of *advantage* as *duty*, to be dear to them; so that the *Church* may most aptly address to these her *Sons* in the same form *St. Paul* does to the *Philippians* when he conjures them to unity, *Phil. 2. 1. If therefore there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil you my Joy that you be like minded.* And can it be possible for any who have tasted all or any of these, to think fit to wrangle them away; to exchange these divine *irradiations*, the Antepast and Emblem of Heaven, for those bitter *dissentions*, whose *Alpha* and *Omega*, their *original* and *end* are Hell, and do as lively represent as they certainly lead to the horreur and confusion of that land of Darknes.

BUT if some mens appetites be so depraved, that they find more Melody in *discord*, than in the *harmony* of the Angelick Quires, yet even these can discern *Musick* in a consort of *Plaudites*, and seldom miss to be affected with those *Eulogies* which are given themselves; and therefore though they disjoyn the Apostles motives, *Phil. 4. 8.* and will do nothing for vertue, yet they may be presum'd more considerate of Praise: And God knows, in a wrong sense they are too much so; and sure, as we have already observed  
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by it, have made no small *contributions* to our *discord*s: yet did they measure *Glory* by its right and proper *Standard*, they would find they have all this while courted a *shadow*, and that the *substance* will never be acquir'd by being *fomenters* of publick Mischief; but the unhappiness of it is, that our *Ecclesiastick* as our *Secular* Duellists abuse themselves with false notions of Honor, novel Opinions and subtle Questions they think attest the *pregnancy* and *acuteness* of their Understandings, and give them *reputation*; but alas, how vain an imagination is this? Who admires the *Sagacity* of the Viper, that Eats her way through her *mothers bowels*? Or who reverences a man for the *sharpness* of that Sword wherewith he commits his *Paricide*? Nay, what more infamous brands have Records of all ages stuck upon any, than those who were *Ingeniosissime nequam*, & *facundi malo publico*, who us'd the best Parts to the worst Ends, and with the greatest *cunning* and *artifice* have contrived their *mischiefs*?

BUT could we abstract from these *pernicious effects*, and suppose that this *exercise* of their Faculties were *innocent*, yet sure it would be too *light* and *impertinent* to become *matter of praise*. He that should spend all his Time in *tying* inextricable Knots, only to baffle the Industry of those that should attempt to *unloose* them, would sure be thought not much to have serv'd his generation. 'Tis one of the certainest *Estimates* we can make of a man, to measure him by the *employments* he chuses, if those be *slight* and *trifling*, they suggest

suggest the Person to have *low thoughts*; what an abasement of Majesty was it thought in *Nero* to become a *Fidler* and *Stage-player*; and *Herodian* tells us, that men hoped no longer for any thing princely from *Commodus* the Emperor, when he had once lifted himself among the *Fencers*, and instead of the magnificent *styles* of his Predecessors, derived from the *conquests* of great and populous Nations, assumed This, *The vanquisher of a Thousand Gladiators*: And certainly 'tis no less a descent and diminution for those who were design'd by God for the *highest achievements*, the subduing the Kingdom of Satan, and pulling down his strong holds, to devote themselves to these so much *ignobler contests*, and account their *conquests*, not from the number of *Souls* won to God, but of *Opposers* worsted in Argument. Indeed, as we before observ'd, they have now rendered the *Church* a kind of *Theatre*, Disputes are managed with such Sleight and Sophistry, that at the best, the *litigants* do but set forth a shew of *Fencers*: 'Twere well if they did not sometimes play the *Gladiators*, by that wounding deadly sharpness they use, and 'twould be consider'd what a change is now made: In the Primitive times, none that own'd any *relation* to the Church were allowed to be *spectators* of those Games, now That is made the *Stage*, and her ablest Persons the *Actors*. But certainly 'tis very little to the reputation of those who have so unworthily debauch't both it and themselves; and therefore to all other *disswatives* we may add this  
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of the *Uncreditableness*: For let men phancy what they please of the *Glory* acquir'd in these opportunities of shewing their parts, the best that can be said of them is, that *they use Wit foolishly*; A character whereof the one part devours the other, and leaves not so much as a mouthful of that *popular air* which these *Camalions* gasp after. In a word, though *vain-glory* be a principle I shall commend to no man, yet in this case 'twere more tolerable if it would work the right way, put them upon what were really *praise-worthy*, and then sure 'twould encline them rather to *close* than *widen* the breaches of *Sion*. To inflict wounds on an unresisting Patient, is a thing that requires neither *courage* nor *skill*: Every man can do that who has but ill nature enough, but to *cure* them is an act at once of *Art* and *Mercy*, and entitles to the Praise of both; and therefore if any mans *eagerness* of *Glory*, have made him over-see the way to it, let him now at last recover his *wanderings*, and seek it in this one only proper *Method*.

BUT this is, I confess, a *Topick* of *Perfwasion* fitter for *Philosophers* than *Divines*, and I wish I may have urg'd it impertinently; it being much less shame for *me* to have done so, than for *them* to need such an Argument. There is another more genuine and proper, derived from the nature of *distributive Justice*, which requires a man to do his *Utmost* to repair the *injuries* he has done to any, this is so stated a *rule*, that all our *Casuists* justly press it in all cases of damage: But are there



there not many of them, who while they so eagerly assert that *obligation* in other mens cases, do as *David* did in the matter of the poor mans Lamb; severely sentence that *injustice*, whereof *themselves* are more highly Guilty. To every such I would speak in the words of *Nathan*, and say *thou art the Man*. Alas, shall every little *trifle* I purloin from my Neighbour have *weight* enough to sink me to the *abyss*, and shall *thefts* of the greatest magnitude, the robbing God of his *honour*, the Church not only of her *Patrimony*; but her *Peace*; and the World of those inestimable *benefits*; which from a uniform consonant Christianity were to have been transmitted to it? Shall these I say be so slight and inconsiderable, as not to hinder his ascent to the hill of the Lord? Shall the least *violence* I offer to the person of an Enemy oblige me to *satisfaction*, and shall he rend and tear the *body* of his Saviour (who willingly expos'd his *natural* body only in tenderness to that *mystical* one, which is thus violated) and shall this criminous *barbarity* exact no offers towards *amends*? Certainly no man can have *partiality* enough to think it, and if he do not, he is to remember *himself* indispensably engag'd to take the same *course* he prescribes to *others*, and with his utmost *industry* endeavour to repair the *injury* he has done.

AND O that we might see this so essential a piece of *Justice* assum'd among us, that our impertinent *strifes* might be superseded, and all moulded into the one noble *Emulation*, who shall  
fastest

fastest unravel his own *mischiefs*, and promote that *peace* he has hitherto disturb'd. This indeed were worthy to be the united design of all learned men; and were it once so, who knows how prosperous it might be: For though some *single attempts* have miscarried, yet probably one great *cause* why they do so, was because they were *single*. When one Person comes with *pacifick arguments* to part an *enraged multitude*, let his Reasons be never so convincing, they are not like to be much adverted to; the only *effect* is, that he who design'd himself the common *Friend*, is taken as the common *Enemy*; but where many associate in such a design, and make a party for peace, their *numbers* give a considerableness to their *proposal*, and prepare for their *success*. And were there such a *combination* in order to the Churches Quiet, it were more than possible they might undermine the *contrary attempts* of Faction and Discord.

AND why should not every man be *ambitious* to make one in this so *pious a confederacy*, and resolve most studiously to endeavour the *composing* the Distractions of the Church, in which they may borrow something of *instruction* even from their past guilts, and copy out their own *industry* to this better purpose. This is sure; our *disputes* had never so multiplied, had there not been a great deal of *unhappy diligence* in nourishing the seeds of them: Every *controverted Tenet* has been heightned and improved, *till* it have spawn'd a *numerous brood*, so that those who at first *differ'd*,

perhaps but in some few things, wrangle on, till at last they agree in fewer: Now were the like Industry applied the *other way*, it might sure do much to the changing the *whole Scene*. If men would as nicely observe the Principles of *agreement* between *dissenting parties*, and with as much Art and Care seek to dilate and spread them; why might not they as much *overwhelm* our *Differences*, as they have been *overwhelmed* by them? 'Tis sure that those *Universal truths*, to which all Parties assent, are, as the *clearest* for their Evidence, so the most *important* for their Consequence: And why should not *these*, if rightly managed, be a more enforcing *motive* to *Unity*, than the more *singular opinions* (perhaps phancies) of some men, can be to *Discord*? Certainly would but our *Moses's* try what this *rod of God* in their hand could do, they would find it able to devour all *those* of the *Magicians*. Would they like *Benhadabs* Ambassadors, catch hold of every amicable *expression*, any thing that looks towards *Peace*, and close in with it, they might probably see *Effects*, beyond what can at distance be expected. For sure *Peace* is not such a *dry Tree*, such a *Sapless* unfertile thing, but that it might *fructifie* and *encrease* as well as *Discord*, were there a just care taken to *Cherish* and *nourish* it.

INDEED this Design is the only *Amulet* which can render it safe to look into *controversies*, which are else apt to infuse a kind of *acrimony*, and *venome* into mens spirits; For we see many,

many, whose *curiosity* at first brought them as unconcern'd *spectators*, do within a while engage with all earnestness in the *contest*: but those who study differences only with an aim of composing them, these have their thoughts determin'd and fixt, and so not left loose to the enticements of any Party. *Aristotle* says that on the *Hill Olympus* the Air is so subtil and piercing, that those who ascend thither, are forced to carry with them *wet Spunges*, by that *moisture* somewhat to allay that extreme *tenuity* which otherwise would be deadly; and sure they that deal in *controversies*, live in no less *corrosive an Air*, and therefore had need make the like provision, and carry with them this *Pacifick purpose*, as a *lenitive* and *Emollient* against the infectious *sharpness* they will there meet with.

AND now how blessed a thing were it, if we could once thus follow the things that make for Peace, that the *numberless mutual enmities* which are now among us, may all be reduced into one, that we may fight not against *single Adversaries*, but against *War* its self, and contend against *nothing but contention*. And sure our victory here were worth millions of those petty conquests wherewith men please themselves, and which acquire them so little of real advantage, that the same account which was given of *Otho* and *Vitellius*, that the *war* would swallow up the one, and the *victory* the other, is too applicable to our *combatants*, who are like to be equally unhappy in *defeat or success*. The *Spartans* had an

Order that when any of their *Generals* had compassed his Design by *policy* or *treaty*, he should sacrifice an *Oxe*, but when by *force* and *bloudshed*, a *Cock* only : from the distant values of which oblations, *Plutarch* observes how much they preferr'd the *Archievements* of calm and sober *counsels*, before those of *strength* and *power* : but sure the disparity is more eminent in the present instance, where if we *fight* we wound our Brethren, but if we *unite* we *destroy* our Enemy : baffle and circumvent *Satans* Master-stratagem, and not only *worst* but *outwit* him. Indeed this and this only is worth our Industry, whereas those *little defeats* we give Each other, are like those in a civil War, wherein the *publick* is still sure to be a *Lofer* ; upon which consideration the *Romans* allowed not their Captains to triumph for such *Victories* ; and sure our *Christianity* is very ill bestowed on us, if it have made us so much worse natur'd, as to choose those ruinous Conquests *at home*, before the most glorious and profitable ones *abroad*.

'T WAS *Abner's* admonition to *Joab*, when he was in a hot pursuit of the *Israelites*, 2 Sam. 2. 26. *Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the later end?* and sure 'tis more than time for our Leaders to make the same reflection, and as *Joab* did there, call back the People from following their Brethren : Nay indeed, would they but attend, they might hear themselves called back ; the great Captain of their Salvation founding a retreat from these

these fatal skirmishes. *Xenophon* in the institution of *Cyrus* tells us of one *Chrysanthus*, who in the heat of battail had his hand lift up to strike an Enemy, but hearing in the very instant the Trumpet sound a *retreat*, stopt his blow. A great sobriety of *courage* so to shew more Zeal to the obeying his General, than the annoying his Enemy; and an Instance of much *reproach* to our *Spiritual Combatants*, who have shewed themselves so much worse disciplin'd, as in spight of daily repeated calls to Peace, still to pursue their Hostility: But sure such an *insolence* is so inconsistent with the pretence they make of fighting Gods Battails, that they must either reform the one, or disclaim the other.

AND now if after all that hath or can be said of the *obligation*, *necessity*, or *advantages* of Peace, we are put to the Psalmists Complaint, *that there are still those that will make them ready to battail*: if men are of so untreatable a Temper, that nothing can be obtain'd of them: what remains for those that are Peaceable and Faithful in *Israel*, but to bewail those Mischiefs they cannot redress? If the Church must perish, at least to give her Funeral rites, and if they cannot quench her flames, yet to bedew her ashes with their tears. 'Tis true, we cannot yet say she is quite dead; but though she breaths yet in a few pious peaceful Souls, yet like a *Palsied person*, she scarce moves a Limb, she wants vigor to actuate the generality of her professors, and remains rather a trunk than a body: and sure if there be truth in that



Physick Aphorism, which sayes that *diseases which cross the temper and constitution of the Patient are most dangerous*; we may well conclude her *desperate*, there being nothing more repugning to the very Elements and Principles of her Being, than those contentions under which she now *groans*.

YET there is an *omnipotent Power* to whom no Difficulties are insuperable, an *unerring Physician* who makes the most hopeless Diseases, but the Triumph of his Art. O let us resort to him, and invite his Aids in the same pathetick form, wherewith he was solicited for *Lazarus*, Jo. 11. 3. *Lord behold she whom thou lovest is sick*: She for whose sake thou enduredst such contradiction of *sinners* against thy self, is now by the contradiction of her own *Children*, languishing and expiring: she for whom thou pouredst out *thy blood*, lies weltring in her own, Lord save or she periseth: Were such Petitions enforced and ingeminated by the daily breathing of humble devout hearts, who knows how prevalent they might be. In this sense also *Heaven* might suffer violence; nor is there any better countermin to all the outrages acted upon Earth than by making them thus reverberate in our cries and prayers.

AND perhaps this Consideration will draw us all, even the most *peaceful* of us into the *guilt* of a negative Accessariness to the present Mischiefs. There are divers that dislike our *contentions*, and blame the *abettors*; but yet with such  
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Unconcern'dness and Indifferency, as that where-with we commonly talk of the *combustions* of foreign States, wherein we rather express our *Judgment* than our *resentments*, and do make it more our *discourse* than our *concern*. And even of those who have in some degree laid it to heart, who is there that has not been some way wanting in the ardency, or frequency of his intercessions? let every one seriously interrogate his own Heart, and I fear 'twill witness to him, that his own *private concerns* are much apter to excite his *devotions*. Let us remember with what *passion* and *importunity* we invoke God in our particular Exigents, and consider whether *we* are equally affected with *those* of the Church: Hast thou been like *Hezekiah*, sick unto death? and hast thou with him wept sore, and vehemently solicited a recovery? has thy *estate* been invaded by Oppression, thy *fame* by Slander and Detraction? and hast thou with loud and earnest cries, appealed to that *God to whom vengeance belongs*? or hast thou been in that condition which is proverbial for setting men to their prayers? hast thou like *Jonas* been in a storm, in minutely expectation of being swallowed up by the *waves*, if not the *Whale*; and in this Extasie of fear, when as *thy soul was* as the Psalmist speaks, *even melted away because of the Trouble*, hast cried unto the Lord, and even out-noys'd the billows in thy clamorous importunities for aid? Hast thou in all; or any of these estates been thus affected for thy self? then remember whether thy *resentments*

have been proportionable for *that* which is much better than thy self: If the no less imminent and pressing *dangers* of the Church, have not as much awakened thy *fervor*, given as sharp and piercing an *accent* to thy Prayers, thou must needs confess, thou hast saln short, of what thou shouldest and mightest have done towards her rescue.

AND if this Inquisition be *impartially* made, who among us can plead *not guilty*? and therefore in reflections upon our past omissions, we are *in justice* oblig'd to redouble our *Zeal*, to say over again our *Tepid heartless prayers*, and inflame them with a *Cole* from the Altar; an earnest affectionate Concern for all that is holy, such as may prompt us to cry, and that mightily to God: We see the *Ninevites* could do it when there was no visible approach of *danger*, but meerly upon the *presage* of a stranger Prophet, backt with the *consciousness* of their own Guilt: I fear we more than equal them in the *later* Motive, I am sure we far exceed them as to the *former*. The *miseries* we are to deprecate being not only under denunciation and threat, but actually upon us, though withall so improvable, that after all the *black Catalogue* our Experience brings in; our Fears meet us with the *bottomless Propheticke menace*, *Esay 5. 25. for all this his Anger is not turn'd away, but his hand is stretched out still.* 'Tis the usual Oeconomy of divine Justice to make our *Crimes* our *Punishment*, and to give us up to *those ills*, which were at first, our own *depraved choice*; and God knows we have too much  
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reason to fear this may be our case: That we who have so perversly violated all the *bands* of Unity, wantonly wrangled our selves out of all *inclinations* to Peace, should never be able to resume them; that all those *gentle breathings* of Grace, by which *exasperated Passions* are to be cool'd and tempered, should be withdrawn, and we finally be given up to be dissipated by those Whirl-winds our selves have rais'd: That *Christianity* which we have made the stale and Property to our irregular *appetites*, us'd only as *fig-leaves* to hide our *shame*, should wither and shrink into nothing; and that *we* who could not agree in what manner to *retain* it, should at last too well agree to *renounce* it.

THIS alas, as it is the *fearfullest*, so is it the *probablest* Issue of our wild Contentions, such as nothing but the miraculous Effluxes of divine Clemency can avert. O let us with all the *groans* and *tears*, so deplor'd a Condition exacts, address thither, importune the *father of Mercies* to pity *us*, who know not how to pity *our selves*, and that though we have cast off *all bowels*, yet that we may find them all concenter'd *in him*: that he will heal our *wounds*; and which of all others is the most desperate, our *unwillingness* to be healed: that the *Spirit of Peace* may overshadow us, and impress on us the *dove-like qualities* of Meekness and Gentleness: that he would rescue our Religion from our Profanation not by taking *it* from *Us*, but by conforming *us* to *It*: Finally that he would do for us, not only above what we  
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can *ask* or *think*, but beyond what we would *wish* or *chuse*, and not suffer us to *acquire* the Miseries we so eagerly *pursue*.

THIS *divine interposition* alone is it that can possibly secure us, and indeed the suit amounts to no less, than that he will *force* upon us the Blessing we *resist*, and do us good against our wills, which is so bold a *request*, that they had need be more than ordinary Favourites that shall prefer it. Those *hands* must be very pure, that are lift up in such an *intercession*: and therefore all that undertake it are obliged to qualify themselves for it, by purging out not only the *levain* of Malice and Strife, but all other *filthiness* of the Flesh and Spirit: without This, we can never approve our selves to intercede in earnest; for what can be more ridiculous than to deprecate the *ruine* of Christianity by the *contentions* of other men; when our selves contrive it by some other vice of our own? This is not to desire it should *live*, but that none but we should *kill* it. 'Twill therefore concern those who wish the *Peace* of the Church, to examine whether they do as much project for her *Purity*; otherwise 'tis a mockery to pretend such a *jealous tenderness* for her. We have seen there are more waies than one, by which Christian practice may be evacuated, and it matters little from whence that Wind blows that ship-wracks our Piety. Yet 'tis not to be denied that of all those *tempestuous blasts*, this of our *contentions* is the roughest and most fatal. 'Tis indeed not a single gust, but an encounter and struggling

gling of several contrary winds ; and God knows no *poetical description* can out-doe the *horror* of the storms they have rais'd ; yet for ought I discern, there is nothing that is less vulgarly accused, which I must account to the Reader, as the *cause* why I have detain'd him so long upon this Head ; and given it a *length* so unproportionable to the *preceding* parts of this Discourse.

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## CHAP. XX.

*The Close.*

**W**E have now seen the unhappy riddle of the Unchristianness of Christians unfolded, have observ'd the Originals and Causes of That which is too notorious to all the world in its Effects. And though in this cursory view the Reader is not to think he has any such compleat discovery, as should supersede his own farther inquisition, yet as it may serve to awaken, so somewhat to assist his Industry, give him some light and insight into the wiles of Satan: and by branding some of the chief of those cheats which have robb'd us of our Piety, prepare for the detection of the whole Confederacy: in the interim this Specimen may serve to stop his wonder at the ruinous estate of Christianity, for though 'tis true that it was compacted of all the most incorruptible materials, had all the harmony of parts which the most exact Frame and Composure could give it, and so was qualified both for strength and beauty, to have defied all the injuries of Time; yet while she has so many Underminers, 'tis not strange to see her in the dust, there being no one of these, especially that I last insisted on, which has not destructive efficacy enough; first to deface, and then to ruine her.

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*BUT* it is but an unprofitable acqurest to know the Authors of our mischiefs if we stop there, this enquiry being matter not of meer Curiosity, but of the nearest and most pressing Interest: we search not after Malefactors for their acquaintance, but for their punishment, and our own security; and all our discoveries of this kind are vain, if we apply them not to that purpose. Let me therefore conclude with this earnest Petition to the Reader, That he will not to all the native Defects of this discourse, add this accidental one that it shall be perfectly impertinent; a meer waste of his Time and my own; which it will inevitably prove, if it engage him not in an earnest prosecution of those Delinquents it hath appeacht; and in as earnest an endeavour to repair the Mischiefs they have wrought.

*IN* short, let every man deposit what he has here read, not with his memory only but his conscience, let him there seriously ponder the Excellency of that holy vocation, as S. Paul terms it, Eph. 4. 1. to which he is call'd: and then as seriously consider, whether he have as the Apostle there exhorts, walked worthy of it; if he find he have not (as alas who is there that has?) let him search out as the particulars, so the causes of his Miscarriages: diligently sift out those Fallacies of Satan, or his own heart; those sly Delusions which have made him act thus preposterously against all the Convictions of common reason, natural conscience, or Christian experience; and when he has discovered, let him make no delay to rescue himself from their Treacheries, but manfully  
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*break those withs and cords (which are too weak to hold any that will but in earnest remember, he is a Nazarite, a Person consecrate to God) resolutely resist the insidious careffes of those Dalilah's, which will deliver not Himself only, but the Ark to the Philistines. Nor is he to content himself with his own single escape, but to propagate the deliverance, to as many as he can; let him blazon and stigmatize those Imposters (for 'tis a combining with them to conceal them) warn and caution others against those jugling Artifices, by which himself was entrapped, and make his own ship-wracks a Sea-mark for the securing the course of other Passengers. This is the Effect of Christs admonition to S. Peter, when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren; and a piece of that Fraternal charity we all owe to every particular Soul, to whom we have opportunity to dispence it.*

*BUT besides that private Obligation, it becomes a duty upon a higher, and more publick Account, it being the only way to take off that Scandal we have brought upon our Religion; which as it was not contracted by the irregularities of one or two persons, but by associated and common crimes; so neither will it be removed by a few single, and private Reformations; there must be combinations, and publick Confederacies in Vertue, to ballance and counterpoise those of Vice, or she will never recover that pristine honour which she acquired by the general Piety of her Professors. In those primitive days there was such an abhorrence of all that was Ill, that a vicious person was lookt on as a kind of Monster*

Monster or Prodigie, and like a putrified Member cut off, as being not only dangerous, but noisome to the Body: but alas, the Scene is so chang'd, that the Church is now made up of such as she would then have cast out; and 'tis now as remarkable an Occurrent to find a good Christian, as it was there to see a bad: and since every thing is estimated not according to its rare and casual, but frequent usual Operations, 'tis easie to conclude, that Christianity has lost as much in its Repute, as it appears to have done in its Efficacy: nor will there be any way of repairing it, till We be generally rendred so malleable to its impressions, that our Lives may attest its Force and Energy.

NAY indeed 'tis not only its honour, but its being is concern'd in it, active Principles cease to be when they cease to act. You cannot hinder the fire to burn but by putting it out: and to suppress the Operation of our Religion is indeed to extinguish it; at least to deprive it of its proper and specifick act: so that if it can be said to be; 'tis only by that abuse of speech which calls a dead or painted man, a Man: It may perhaps be a vizor for the Hypocrite, a Stale for the Ambitious, a wash or tincture for the Covetous; but where it is these, it ceases to be its self. The essence and being of Christianity is practice; and according to that Test and proof thereof, where almost can it be said to Exist in the world? we have indeed some images and shadows of it: Some have taken its picture, but the substance and solid body is vanished, resolv'd into Air, and seems sadly to have moraliz'd the poetick Fable of Sybills

*Sybills being worn into a voice, we have turn'd it into a meer noise and sound; nay, which is worse, into an Eccho, that flattering complying voice, which reverberates every mans own language to him: Men dictate to their Religion, and then will needs perswade themselves and others, that their Religion dictates to them, will have the re-bounds of their own Fancy or Lust pass for Divine Oracles; so suborning this Aiery fantastick Christianity to legitimate those practices, which the real solid one forbids and Execrates.*

*TO this dismal forlorn estate have we brought that which was designed to bring us to bliss, herein far exceeding the barbarity of the brutish Sodomites, they would have violated the Messengers of their ruine, but we those of our safety: We having not only neglected, but vilified and reproacht the Embassy sent us from Heaven, and instead of embracing that purity and peace it recommended to us, have done our Parts to make it forgotten that ever it was sent upon any such Errand; and indeed so it is like to be, if some Heroick piety do not revive its Memory, and teach us to record it not so much in our books as lives: There, and there only it will be universally legible, there it would indeed appear, what it is in its own nature, the power of God unto Salvation.*

*AND now why should we not all Emulously contend, who shall first put off that ugly vizor we have put upon our Religion, and restore it to its native form; especially considering that with its Beauty we lose its Dowry too; forfeit all those glorious Rewards*

wards which it promises to them that preserve it immaculate. 'Tis only a pure and undefiled Religion that will invest us in those white robes, wherein we are to follow the Lamb. And sure those who have here endeavoured to darken and extinguish all the rays of Spiritual Light, that have lived as if they profest Christianity meerly in spite to defame it, must never hope it shall bring them to shine as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father, or procure them the reward of blameless Souls. No; it promises no other Crown than that of Righteousness, and therefore they that want the Righteousness must want the Crown also: Nay, besides that so inestimable a Reversion, they lose all those present Joys and satisfactions which true Christian practice would afford them, and which both in respect of the intenseness and duration, infinitely exceed the most profuse sensualities the World ever tasted.

THESE are interests that are sure Important enough, and yet we must be woe'd to consider them, nay, that does not prevail neither, but with a perverse Coyness we hold off; all the solicitations and importunate Calls of God are lookt upon as Artifices and Designs, as if he had some Ends of his own to serve upon us, and (as the Corinthians suspected St. Paul) meant to make a gain of us; we treat with him as if he were the Person to be advantaged, and barter for Heaven with such an Indifference, as if it would want Us more than We it; never considering that 'tis impossible for him to have any other Concern, than that which his Compassion to us creates,

*and the more earnest and passionate That is, the more it should excite our own care, it being the Extremest degree of perverse Folly, to abandon and despise our own Interest meerly because a Friend or Patron considers and prizes it. And this brand must lye upon every one of us, who still refuse to discern the things that belong to our Peace, after God has done so much to render them not only visible but attainable.*

*WHAT shall I say more, but conclude with Christs passionate wish, that we might in this our day, understand the things that belong to our Peace, and O that the Spirit of Peace and Light would descend among us, illuminate us with that true practical Wisdom, which may convince us, that our Duty and Interest are the same thing under several forms, and that while we impiously cast off the one, we do as foolishly betray the other. That so those inestimable advantages our Christianity gives towards both, may not be thus madly lost, serve only as a price in the hand of a Fool, who hath no heart to it, Prov. 17. And to this end let us humbly and earnestly invoke the Father of lights, to illuminate all those whom the God of this world hath blinded, that after he hath sent into the world the Image of his own eternal brightness; caused the Sun of Righteousness so long to shine upon us, it may not serve only to involve us in that most dreadful condemnation, which awaits those who love darkness more than light; but that answering the purpose of our holy calling, walking as Children of light,*

light, we may vindicate that Christian profession which we have so defamed, secure to our selves the light of Gods countenance here, and that of his glory hereafter.

## F I N I S.



## E R R A T A.

**P**Age 12. Line 19. for taught *Read* fought, p. 97. l. 9. for diverts *r.* divests, p. 99. l. 7. for insidious *r.* infidious, p. 105. l. 27. for them *r.* him, p. 114. l. 14. for one *r.* own, p. 118. l. 6. for owes *r.* owns, p. 164. l. 27. for assimilation *r.* assimilation, p. 165. l. 17. for shoals *r.* shoals, p. 171. l. 16. for avow *r.* disavow.

